

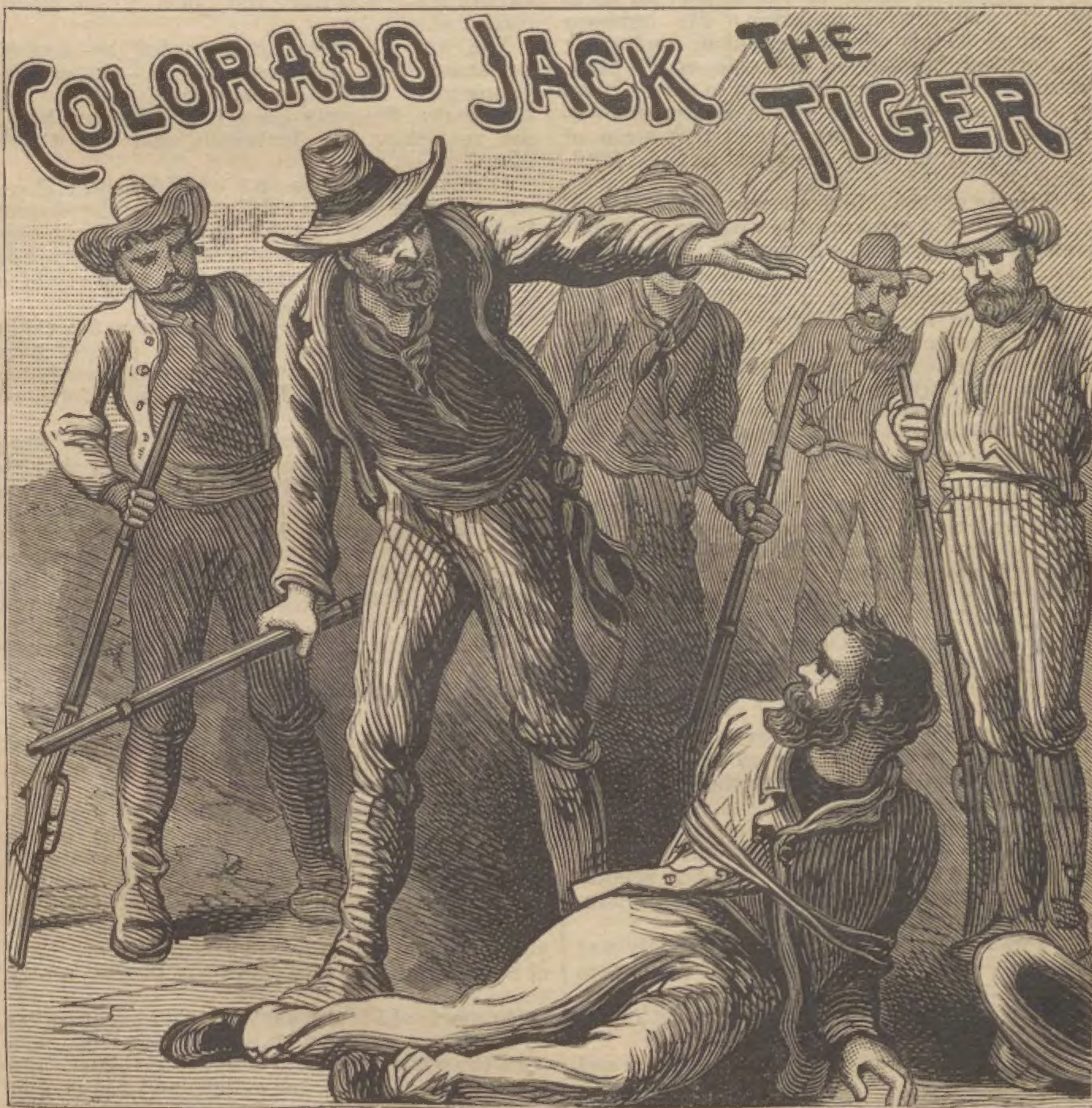
BEADLE'S POCKET Library

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"GET UP!" COMMANDED PEDRO, WHO WAS THE ACKNOWLEDGED CHIEF. THE ROBBER ONLY SCOWLED IN REPLY.

Colorado Jack, the Tiger;

OR,

THE GHOST OF THE TRAILER.

BY FREDERICK DEWEY.

CHAPTER I.

THE CAVE-HUNTER AND THE SHADOW.

It was a sultry, scorching day, on the banks of the river Gila—very sultry and silent.

Riding up the bank, a traveler halted and sat for a moment buried in profound thought. He was a Mexican, a giant in proportions. His visage was that of a crafty, wily man, and his keen black eye was one that never quailed. His dress was simple, being in the American manner, of well-dressed buckskin. He however still clung to his sombrero, which, instead of being cocked jauntily on the side of his head, was drawn down over his eyes to shield them from the hot sun. His whole equipment was that of a mounted ranger, and this style of dress has so often been described as to be familiar to all.

The name of the Mexican was Pedro Felipe, the old and tried servant of a wealthy and kind master, also a Mexican. A year ago his master, Senor Martinez, had occasion to cross a vast, sterile wilderness, lying a hundred or more miles north of the Gila River. While on that plain, in a remote part of it, called the Land of Silence (a ghostly, spectral plain, considered haunted), his only daughter, a beautiful young girl, was abducted by a robber chief, and carried away to a rendezvous—a hollow hill in the plain. Here she was rescued by Pedro, disguised as a savage.

The hillock had an aperture in it, and Pedro, on hearing a noise, looked out and saw the lieutenant of the band, a fierce man called the "Trailer," approaching. Knowing he must take his life or be discovered by the whole band, he shot him dead off his horse.

Pedro had but one glaring fault—the love of gold. He was now on his way to the hill in the Land of Silence to search for the treasure, and he felt confident of finding it.

Pedro Felipe's absorbing love of gold had brought him on this hot day to the northern bank of the Gila, on his way to the land of Silence in search of it.

Pedro's experience had been strange in this land, and he was very superstitious. But he was also brave and crafty, having the reputation of being the best Mexican scout and Indian-fighter in his part of the country.

So, urged on by his love of gold—his only and great fault—and by the prospect of adventure and excitement, he was to brave, alone and unaided, the land of specters and of death—the Land of Silence.

He turned his horse's head to the south, and peered away over the plain. Nothing was in sight; he was alone in the vast wilderness.

"Farewell, Mexico!" he said; "good-by to your sunny plains and pleasant groves! May it not be long before I come back to thee, my land!

Farewell, my old master, my beautiful mistress, and my noble husband, my old companion, Benedento—and all I hold dear. This morning I stood on your border, sunny Mexico! Tomorrow, at sunset, I will be alone, *alone* in the Land of Silence. Farewell, my land! I may never tread your soil again."

He waved his hand with a graceful parting salute, calmly, but with a vague presentiment of coming evil. Then he remounted, turning his horse's head to the north; under the hot sun, blazing with blinding heat, in the desert alone, he rode away, bound for the Land of Silence.

CHAPTER II.

LOST IN THE DESERT.

ON the afternoon in which the last chapter's events occurred, a train of three wagons plodded slowly up the southern bank of the Gila, about twenty miles east from the place where Pedro forded it.

The wagons were accompanied by several horsemen and one horsewoman—or, rather, young girl. In fact, these were almost the entire party, the only ones in the wagons being the teamster, one American, and two Canadians.

It was a small train—a "whiffit outfit." Three wagons were a small number beside the dozens that generally consorted. It could easily be seen it was not the property of a large stock-owner or freighter, but was evidently the property of a single man—an immigrant.

It was even so. The man yonder on the verge of the bank—that sturdy, bronzed man of fifty or thereabouts, about whom the other horsemen gather, is the owner; Joel Wheeler, a Northern New Yorker.

Hearing of the rapid fortunes which were constantly being made by enterprising Americans in Mexico, he had left a comfortable home in New York to gain immense riches.

His exchequer ran low: marauding savages and violent disease thinned his flocks; his native servants plundered him; until, completely disgusted and homesick, he packed his goods and chattels, and started, *en route* for his old State.

His daughter, the horsewoman on the sorrel pony, was a lovely girl of eighteen. Blessed with natural beauty, the several years' sojourn in Mexico had done much to enliven and develop it—being a brunette, she was rendered doubly comely by the fresh, dry air of that country.

Christain Wheeler (Christain being curtailed to the tantalizing appellation of Kissie) was a courageous, high-spirited girl. Though being in possession of several masculine traits, she still preserved that feminine reserve and chariness of conduct which is so necessary in male eyes, and without which woman sinks to the level of a beautiful, favorite dog, or a precise, costly gem.

If report said truly, she bestowed sweet smiles on her father's chief man, or foreman. He was with the party, being an adopted son of the old gentleman. Sturdy, self-reliant and brave, and withal, handsome, being brought up from infancy with Christina, no wonder her romantic spirit had endowed him with all the qualities requisite as a hero.

The young man bestrode a light-colored steed, known from its peculiar color throughout the Western and Southern States as a "clay-bank."

Such a man was Samuel Carpenter. At twenty-five years of age he well understood wild life, and he showed his tidy, neat habits—everything belonging to him being kept in perfect order.

The other two horsemen were rough-looking, wiry men of middle age. One, mounted on a gray "States horse," was Burt Scranton—Carpenter's assistant. The other was a man well known in Southern Texas and Northern Mexico—Tim Simpson, the guide.

The latter, for a stipulated sum, had agreed to conduct the party by the shortest and quickest way to the Leavenworth and Texas trail—being nearly four hundred miles from their present position.

Like many others of his calling he was reticent in the extreme, scarcely speaking save in monosyllables. He had several reasons for this: one was that it kept him out of trouble; another, that he was not annoyed by a cross-fire of questions, which guides detest.

The teamsters were Kit Duncan, an American, and Napoleon and Louis Robidoux, two brother Canadians, whom Joel Wheeler had brought from New York. They were now returning with glad hearts toward their northern home.

It is unnecessary to state the party were well-armed. The wagons were drawn by horses—six to a wagon.

This is the party, its outfit and position, now on the southern bank of the Gila.

They forded the river and stood headed northward on the other side. Now they were in the heart of the Indian country—now they must be wary and guard against the hostile and cunning savages.

"Well," remarked Mr. Wheeler looking north, "had we better stop here, or go on?"

The question was addressed to the guide, who was down on his knees searching for Indian "sign." He arose.

"Stop hyar!"

"Why? what are your reasons?"

"Water hyar. No water fur forty mile."

"Then we shall have to stop," said Sam, the foreman. "Old plainsmen will tell you when out of water to keep your stomach empty, unless a dry cracker can be called food. It is true, medical men say the reverse; but, sir, men that have suffered thirst know that food without water is dangerous. *I have tried it.*"

"K'rect!" muttered the old guide in assent.

All hands went to work to prepare for the night. While the preparations for camping were going on, the cook, Kit Duncan (the hardest worked, and consequently sourest and snarliest man in the party), who was also a teamster, went down to the stream to fill his kettle with water.

A "jack-rabbit," startled at his approach, sprung from under a projecting sand point, and darted away up the bank. As it gracefully and rapidly "loped" away, Christina (or Kissie, as we shall call her), ever on the alert, noticed it.

"Oh, what an enormous rabbit!" she cried.

"The largest I ever saw. Pray, Simpson, is that the common rabbit?"

"No. Jack-rabbit."

"What a very odd name. Why do they call it so?"

"Big ear; like—like—like—donkey."

"Oh, hum! I perceive. See, it has stopped under that little bush. There—Oh, my! it is hurt—it is lame! see how it limps—I will catch it, it is so curious."

Kissie was impulsive. Without further preface she lightly struck the sorrel pony with her riding-whip, and on a swift gallop went after the rabbit, which slowly limped away.

The guide being the only idle one, alone noticed her. He shook with suppressed laughter, awaiting the result.

The guide well knew, though Kissie did not, that this strange rabbit plays some unaccountable pranks, and is the direct cause of many hearty laughs at a "greenhorn's" expense. Seeing a human being he at once retreats, limping as if badly hurt. This attracts some one not "well up" in prairie life, and he pursues it. But let the sequel tell its own tale.

As Kissie drew near, the rabbit bounded away as if suddenly cured of its disability, gaining some distance; then he limped again—this time dragging one of his hind-legs laboriously.

"Bunny, Bunny," she cried, "you are mine—you are my captive."

She was quite close upon him, and was drawing closer at every spring. The rabbit was almost caught.

For an hour the strange chase continued, the participants sustaining their respective positions, while Dimple panted and lagged and Kissie alternately wondered and plied the whip.

At last the chase terminated rather suddenly. Evidently becoming wearied with his frolics, the rabbit cast a single look behind, then to Kissie's utter dismay, darted away at full speed.

"Duped! miserably deceived!" were her exclamations as the truth forced itself upon her.

"Well, it is of no use that I can see—my remaining here. It is 'most supper-time and I will go back without my boasted capture. So, Dimple—tired, pet? We are going back."

She turned the pony's head around and slowly cantered off, still musing over her defeat, without raising her head.

She had ridden a mile, perhaps, when it occurred to her she had better discover the whereabouts of the train. Accordingly she reined in, and raising her eyes, slowly scanned the prairie before her.

It was bare, the train was not in sight.

She certainly must have become turned round, she must be bewildered as to the direction she had been pursuing.

But no. She distinctly remembered seeing her shadow at her right hand when pursuing the rabbit. She was certain of that—quite sure. What easier than to ride back, keeping the shadow to the left of her? She could not then go astray.

Christina was quick-witted. She no sooner found the wagons were not in sight when the

above reflection ran through her mind. She was impulsive, decided; and knowing this to be the only means of again finding the wagons, started back, with her shadow over her left shoulder.

No sooner had she started on the return track, than, as if to vex and annoy her, a bank of snow-colored clouds rose rapidly in the south. At the same moment a southerly breeze came lightly over the plain.

She saw the banks of clouds arising; she knew if not breeding a terrible squall, they were at least rolling on to obscure the sun; then what were her chances of regaining camp?

A loud, swishing noise accompanied the fleecy clouds, somewhat in the rear of the advanced vapor. She reined in.

It came with a roar, and striking Dimple, almost took her off her feet; but the sturdy little beast spread her legs and stood like a rock. Almost as soon as told it was past, rushing toward the north, gathering strength every moment; and beyond a steady breeze, and a few floating particles in the air, the atmosphere was quiet.

Kissie looked at her tiny watch and sighed; in another hour the sun would sink below the horizon. What, then, would become of her if she did not succeed in finding the camp?

"I must ride somewhere," she said, growing seriously alarmed. "If I haven't the sun to guide me, I must steer without it."

So saying, she re-turned her pony's head and rode away in a canter.

She had not gone far when she reined in with a very white face. Covering her eyes with her hands, she bowed her head and her heart sunk.

"Oh, my God! what shall I do?" she moaned. "What shall I do? Where shall I go?"

Well might she feel alarmed! well might she be terror-stricken; for in her abstraction *she had turned round twice!*

CHAPTER III.

ASLEEP IN THE LAND OF SILENCE

No wonder she was frightened, even terrified. Had she been in a settled country, she would only have experienced vexation and discontent at being forced to spend the night on the prairie; but here she was, far from any settlement, lost from her companions, and in a hostile Indian country.

Dimple pawed impatiently, and tossing her head, snuffed the air; she was fatigued and hungry, and was impatient at being kept at a standstill.

"Quiet, Dimple! You are tired, pet; you have had a hard gallop after a day's march. Dear, dear me; that I had ever left them."

The pony was stamping violently, and, with tossing head, was staring over the plain. Mechanically Kissie followed his gaze.

Away on the distant horizon (the eastern one, though she did not know it) she saw a solitary speck, moving slowly. It was that which had caused the mustang's alarm.

The object was a man, and mounted on a black, powerful horse. It was Pedro Felipe.

She raised her whip, and striking the mustang

sharply, was riding away, when a new object appeared on the horizon opposite the Mexican. Object? rather a number of blots, moving toward her.

She readily became aware that they were a band of mounted men.

She felt her heart leap joyously; it was her friends. They had doubtless become alarmed at her prolonged absence, and had started in search of her. Filled with joy at the thought, she pressed on, her fears at rest. Just then she looked for the far-distant, lone rider—he was not in sight; he had vanished.

Suddenly she stopped the mustang, and a deadly pallor overspread her countenance, a wild fear arose within her. She had counted thirteen distinct objects moving toward her.

Her father's party numbered seven—the one approaching numbered thirteen; it could not be her friends—it could not.

Kissie was like her father—impulsive but cool. Looking back, she calculated the distance between her and the flying savages. It was nearly four miles. She looked at the sky and calculated that darkness would fall in less than an hour.

"They will have to ride like the wind to overtake Dimple in an hour," she said, with a small degree of hope. "Till then, Dimple, fly; in an hour we may be safe for the present."

Running without the incentive of whip or spur, he stretched away; and behind came a dozen and one Apaches, grim and resolved; they were on the war-trail.

A few miles to the west a solitary horseman was pursuing his way northward at a slow gallop. He was a Mexican—Pedro Felipe. At the rate and in the direction the maiden was riding, it would not be long ere she would meet him—she riding northwesterly. Directly south, and nearly fifteen miles behind Pedro, rode a dark, ugly-looking man on a black horse; and though the Mexican had left no visible trail, this mysterious rider was following him, directly in his very tracks.

In a southeasterly direction from him was a train encamped on the Gila for the night. All the work had been finished. The horses were lariatd at hand; the rude kettle was boiling merrily; the cook was swearing and grumbling, as usual; but all was not quiet.

Ever and anon one of the several men lying lazily about would rise, and shading his eyes, peer toward the northeast, as if in search of something.

He was invariably unsuccessful; and, after anxiously gazing for several minutes, would return and talk in low tones to his companions.

Then several would start up together, and peer over the northwestern plain; then, muttering anxiously, would return and lie down again, talking earnestly; something was wrong.

Even the cook, who was generally too hard at work, tired and surly to pay attention to anything outside of his "Dutch oven," would now and then pause, and look anxiously toward the northwest; it was plain something was wrong.

It was twilight on the vast plain north of the Gila. Now the two principal parties had visibly changed their positions. The Indians were quite near, having gained two miles in light—a

vast gain; they must have ridden like the wind, or the sorrel mustang must have lagged.

The last was the case. From some hidden reason Dimple had lost his swift run, and was going at a faltering canter—he was unaccountably fatigued or injured. She could hear faintly the hideous yells behind—a mile and a half distant.

At this, with her last hope giving way, she plied the whip.

The mustang obeyed, and for a few lengths galloped briskly, but soon collapsed, and feebly cantered on. She felt terrified at the thought of captivity and prayed for rescue.

It came. The twilight was almost over, then pitchy darkness would shield her from her red enemies. The darkness swiftly gathered down over the plain; she lost sight of her pursuers, though still hearing their hideous yells; and they, in turn, lost sight of her.

Fifteen minutes later, on pausing and waiting a few moments, Kissie heard them gallop by in the darkness, not ten rods away. Then she turned and rode for an hour in an opposite direction; for the present she was safe.

Alighting, she lay down, and, completely worn out, fell into a light, troubled sleep.

Alone in the desert, guarded by the wary, timid pony, she slept, and the night was dark and gloomy in the Land of Silence—for she was within its ghostly border.

CHAPTER IV.

COLORADO JACK.

As the first gray streaks of dawn slanted across the eastern horizon, the little camp on the Gila was astir, and the members were bustling about.

There is evidently a great commotion in camp; ever and anon the men scan the surrounding horizon; and one and all wear the same anxious look; what is the matter?

The question is answered almost as soon as asked, as a cry arises from one of the watchers. The others start to their feet (they are at present bolting a hasty breakfast) and following their companions' gaze see a horseman coming along the river-bank. He is quite near, having been coming under the bank, and consequently unseen by them.

"Simpson! the guide!" shout one or two voices; then two others add, with a groan, "and alone."

"And alone!" cry the rest, gloomily.

The guide was coming slowly, his mustang lagging with drooping head, as if just freed from a hard, long ride. The guide, too, though generally reserved, was moody, and wore a sort of apologetic, shame-faced air.

Joel Wheeler and young Carpenter sprung to meet him.

"Have you seen her?" asked Mr. Wheeler, though knowing the question was a superfluous one. The guide shook his head.

"Nor any trace of her?" hastily added Carpenter. Simpson slowly shook his head again.

"Not at all—no sign?"

"Nary mark, sign, trail, trace—nary nuthin'. Blast the luck!" he added in sudden ire; "I've done rode over every squar' inch of this kentry

sence last night, fur miles around. She ain't nowhar around hyar, that's sartain shure."

It was only too evident the guide spoke truthfully. His fatigued, travel-worn steed, panting deeply, and his own wearied air, showed that he had ridden far and swiftly.

"Yer see'd no one, then?" asked Burt Scranton.

"Who sed I never see'd no one?" hastily retorted Simpson.

"You did."

"I didn't?"

"What did you say, then?"

"Thet I hedn't see'd the lady—and I hev'n't."

"You have seen some one, then?" asked Carpenter.

"Yes, I hev."

"Whom?"

The guide brought his fist down on his knees:

"A sperrit."

"A spirit? Nonsense! Where?"

"Up hyar, a piece—in a kentry called the Land of Silence."

"Ah! the Land of Silence!" and Burt slowly shook his head. "I've heerd on that place."

The Canadians looked incredulous and grinned. Seeing them in the act, the guide, nettled, burst out:

"Yes, and yer may jist bet yer hides I don't want ter see it ag'in, now. By thunder! ef I warn't skeered I never was, and every one of ye's heerd of Simpson, the guide—every one of ye know 't I ain't no coward, neither."

"What did it look like?" asked Kit Duncan.

The guide slowly dismounted, and flinging his arm over his saddle, said:

"It war the ghost of the Trailer."

"The Trailer!" echoed Burt.

"Yes, the Trailer. Jest the same as he allus war, in his peaked hat and black feather, jest the same as ever he war, armed to kill, he rode his old black hoss rig't by me, not ten feet off. Gee-whittaker! I ked hev touched him."

"Did he speak?" asked Louis Robidoux, in a quizzical manner.

"Thet's the wu'st of it. When he got clos't ter me, he turned his face too-ward me. Gee-crymini! how white his face war."

"What did he say?"

"'You air ridin' late, Tim Simpson.'"

"Is that all?"

"Gee-whiz! ain't thet enough?"

"Why didn't you shoot him?"

"I war too skeered—I know'd 'twar no mortal man."

"How did you know?"

"Cuss yer! a woman's nuthin' ter yer on the ke-westion. How did I know? Wal, the Trailer's got a grudge ag'in' me, an' ef he'd been a man, don't yer see, he'd 'a' plugged me afore I see'd him? He war a fee-rocious man, thet Trailer, and ef he war alive when I met him, he'd 'a' sure plugged me. He didn't, and thet shows he's dead. Durn it! I know he's dead; Pedro Felipe killed him in the Land of Silence over a year ago. I see'd his skeleton onc't."

"Halloa!" exclaimed Burt, suddenly. "Look thar!" and he pointed down the river. All eyes followed the direction.

A man mounted on a trim bay horse was seen advancing at a long, swinging lope, quite near.

He had drawn close during the dialogue, unnoticed, and was coming boldly on, as if he feared no danger. Simpson immediately recognized him.

"Colorado Jack!" he cried. "Gee-menentli! hooray!"

The rider stopped and drew a revolver.

"Who is there?" he demanded in a rich, musical voice, with a purity of accent rarely seen on the Southern plains.

"Tim Simpson, the guide!"

"Is that so? Hurrah! I'm Colorado Jack, the tiger, and I'm a thoroughbred from Tartary, I tell you!"

Belting his revolver, he struck spurs to his splendid bay, and the next moment was heartily shaking Simpson by the hand, wrenching it violently.

"I'm an elephant, I am!" he shouted, in stentorian tones, addressing the entire party. "I'm a Feejee dancing-master, and where's the man that'll say 'boo' to this chap! I'm the fellow who killed cock-robin!"

"You are jest in time, Jack," said the guide. "We want yer ter help us."

Colorado Jack was a noted ranger and inexplicable man.

To describe him, his dress and manner, were a long and hard task. Closely-knit, six feet and three inches in height, with the arm of a blacksmith and the leg of a cassowary, he was a formidable enemy when aroused, and he was a man of iron nerve. Withal, he was at times as tender as a woman, and was always upright and honest.

"What do you want with the king-pin of all rifle-shots? Show me a star, and I'll knock the twinkle out of it with a Number One buck-shot."

The party stared at him aghast. Never before had they seen such a fantastical braggadocio. Had they never before heard of him they would have deemed him a raving maniac, and would have given him a wide berth. But every one who was in that country at that time had heard of the far-famed Colorado Jack.

"What do you want with the people's favorite?" he demanded. "Come—the court is impatient."

Joel Wheeler stepped forward and said:

"Sir, we are—"

"Don't 'sir' me!" interrupted the ranger. "I'm Colorado Jack, and I'm the cock of the walk."

"Well, then, Colorado Jack, my daughter strayed away last night and we fear she is lost—indeed, we are positive she is. If you will lend us your assistance in searching for her, I will cheerfully pay any price you may ask."

"Count me in—just score the grizzly-tamer on the rolls. But stop!" he added, his face becoming grave, and addressing Simpson. "Is the beauteous maid fair to look upon?"

"Ef thar ever was an angel on airth, she's the one," emphatically pronounced the guide.

"Then hurrah! blood raw, blood raw, cut your palate out and eat it—you are just shouting I will. I'm a thoroughbred, sired by Colossus."

"Are you willing to go, then?" demanded Carpenter.

"You're talking, I am."

"Well, just tell the men to hitch up the horses, Burt."

Scranton turned to execute the order, and Mr. Wheeler called a consultation of the principal men, Colorado Jack, Carpenter and Simpson, to decide upon the most feasible plan for recovering Kissie.

Mr. Wheeler was much alarmed. Carpenter noticed his dejection, and though anxious and sad himself, endeavored to cheer him.

"Come, cheer up," he said, laying his hand upon his shoulder. "The case may not be so desperate after all. While there is life there is hope, you know."

"Sam, I know you can sympathize with me—you are the only one who can appreciate my agony, for it is positive agony. To think of the dear child, Heaven knows where, suffering and heart-sick, almost distracts me. Sam, I fear, he worst."

"But she must have left a trail, and with two such famous men as Colorado Jack and Simpson, we can surely trail her. Those two men are prodigies, sir—they are famous even among their fellow-countrymen. Cheer up, sir—see, they are ready to start."

The result of the council was this: the guide, Colorado Jack, Mr. Wheeler, and Sam, were to ride toward the northwest, if possible on Kissie's trail. Burt Scranton and the teamster would follow with the wagons. The trailing-party would proceed moderately, while the wagons would move at a much faster rate than usual to keep in sight. This was done to avoid being separated by Indians should they meet with any. This arrangement (Colorado Jack's suggestion) afterward proved a wise one. But more anon.

"Are you ready?" said Jack, vaulting into his saddle. "If you are, follow the man who can thrash his weight in wild-cats, with a ton of grizzlies thrown in to make the skirmish interesting."

"Yer ain't quit yer bragging yet, I see," remarked the guide.

"Bragging! me brag? d'ye mean it? whiz! I'm the man that never says 'boo' to a lame chicken."

"Hyar's her trail," observed the guide.

Jack vaulted backward to the ground, examined it, swore an oath or two, lit his pipe, boasted a little, then remounted and rode off on the faint, very dim trail, with the wagons rumbling after; the search had commenced.

CHAPTER V.

A DEAD MAN'S GHOST.

ON the day after Pedro left the Gila he arrived at the old robber hillock. As he rode up to it, he mechanically looked for a skeleton he expected to see there—the skeleton of the Trailer. To his surprise not a bone of it was there, where he left the body.

Could the Trailer have come to life? impossible—he was killed instantly. Pedro had shot him from behind, the ball entering his back and penetrating to his heart. No—it could not be possible.

"The skeleton—where in the world can it be?" he muttered, glancing about. "Curse it, I begin

to feel awkward and uneasy already. This is a cursed quiet place—this plain; and such a name as it has, too; just the place for spirits to roam about in. I am beginning to believe they have tampered with the Trailer's bones—I do, indeed. Ha! what's that?"

He had espied something white at a distance away—something which looked dry and bleached, like bones long exposed to the elements. He rode slowly toward it; it (or they) was a bunch of bones clustered together, as if thrown hastily in a pile.

He took them one by one in his hands and narrowly examined them. They were human, he could tell—might they not be the Trailer's?

"They are the Trailer's—they must be," he said, and idly kicking them, mounted and rode back to the hill or mound.

The hollow hill was divided into two chambers, one within the other. The first was dark, and was only lighted by the opening of the door. The floor was the ground, the walls the hillside, the ceiling the summit. The only furniture it contained was a water-bucket, a rusty gun or two, several tattered blankets, and a resinous, partially-consumed torch.

Pedro noticed this torch, and his eyes sparkled.

"Just where I left it a year ago—in this chink. Now I am certain I was the last one here; now I am certain of finding the hidden treasure."

He lighted the torch, and after looking out into the plain, started toward the inner chamber. But suddenly stopping, he went back to the entrance.

"I might as well bring the horse inside now," he said. "Perhaps I may be obliged to spend a week here. He will be out of sight, too."

Going out he brought in the horse, and then tightly closed the entrance. Then his eyes fell on the water-vessel.

Unsaddling the horse, and leaving him to roam at will about the chamber, he again took up the torch and went to the entrance of the inner one.

A pile of blankets lay in one corner, and were evidently long unused. A single gun stood by them—a rifle. Otherwise the room was empty.

Pedro, after satisfying himself as to other occupants, with his habitual energy, began at once to work. Drawing his revolver, he hastily uncapped the tubes; then, lighted by his torch, commenced to sound the wall, the ceiling, the floor—in fact, everything which might conceal the treasure he knew was there.

Outside, the sun still shone on the bare plain, blinding with its heat the few small animals which stole about, the only moving objects on the plain.

The *only* moving objects? Not so; there was another one—a man riding a black horse. Several miles away from the hillock, he was coming, at a slow walk, from the south; going north and to the hillock.

An hour passed. Pedro was working steadily inside, at intervals muttering disjointed sentences. The solitary rider drew near, and halted close to the hillock.

He halted before the entrance, and just then Pedro exclaimed below—he was excited about something. Then he rode round to the opposite

side of the hillock, and drawing up, facing it, sat like a statue on his black horse.

A fierce cry came from the cavern—a cry of wild delight. This was followed by a series of disjointed exclamations expressive of the wildest joy. Then came hurried trampling to and fro—then dead silence. Outside the rider still sat on his sable steed, and remained grim and quiet, never changing a muscle. All was quiet in the Land of Silence.

It was toward the middle of the afternoon when Pedro burst out of the entrance, gesticulating extravagantly, and fairly shouting under the influence of some strong emotion. In his hand he held his horse-blanket, tied into a rude bag; it was loaded with something that chinked musically.

"Found! found!" he cried.

Heavens! what a sight! Rolling out in a sparkling cascade came coin, gold and silver, ornaments of the same metals, costly watches, splendid rings, and guards, and above all, gleaming, sparkling diamonds. Diamonds set in magnificent rings, diamonds garnishing costly brooches, diamonds cut and rough, large and tiny; what a fortune! what beautiful, bewitching riches was there.

Pedro had not formed any idea of the value of his treasure—his brain was so demented he could not have counted twenty correctly. But he saw the coins were all among the highest ever sent from the mint, and nearly all gold; but he had not the slightest idea of the value of the jewels—he only knew he was immensely rich.

"Ah, my yellow, shining, pretty pets!" he exclaimed, filling the bag again. "My darlings! you have made me the richest man in the wide world! Brave, yellow, sparkling boys!"

A horse stamped close by. He listened intently.

Another stamp and a sbrill neigh from a strange horse. Pedro turned sick, his brain reeled; but recovering, he threw the bag into the entrance and drew his jeweled dagger—his rifle was inside.

"Who's there?" he hoarsely said, peering off into the plain. "Speak! man or ghost! who is near—who is there?"

Nothing—no one; the plain is bare. All is quiet in the Land of Silence.

But stay—the hillock hid a part of the plain from view. He would ascend it and discover evil if it was at hand.

With a hoarse cry he brandished his dagger, and with two gigantic strides stood on the summit.

But only for a moment he stood there with a pale, terrified face, staring eye and shaking limbs. Then reeling, with a loud cry he rushed down into the cave and closed the entrance, terrified almost beyond his senses.

What was the matter—what had happened? Enough. There, on his old black horse, under his plumed hat, sat *the Ghost of the Trailer*.

CHAPTER VI.

KISSIE FINDS A FRIEND.

PEDRO sat behind the closed entrance, lowering savagely through the glimmering chinks,

and almost beside himself with astonishment, vague fear, and wonder.

Plucking up courage, he advanced to open the trap and peer out. Just then he heard a footfall above—he drew back again, seized with fear.

The footfall became two, then three, then grew into a succession of patters. He knew the sound—it was a horse. He did not stop to conjecture—he did not hesitate or draw a timid breath; but angry at himself for being alarmed boldly threw open the trap, and with a ready rifle, peered out.

His eyes fell upon a fair young girl coming directly toward him on a sorrel mustang, the latter apparently wandering aimlessly at an easy amble. Her eyes were fixed on the distant plain beyond the hillock, and were wandering as if she saw nothing to attract her attention.

She came on directly toward the entrance. Suddenly, when quite close, the mustang snorted, tossed her head, and shied away from something in front of her.

"Be quiet, Dimple!" commanded the lady. "It is only some large burrow—it is nothing to alarm you. Be quiet, I say!"

Pedro's fears were over. Wondering why a lady—a white and beautiful American lady—should be alone on this wild, sterile plain, he resolved to make himself known. Perhaps she was in distress—mayhap she had just escaped from captivity and needed assistance.

Casting aside his weapons, and wearing an easy, good-natured air which became him, he stepped carelessly out in full view. Lifting his sombrero, he said, with an assuring smile:

"Senorita, your servant."

Snort! The mustang was twenty yards away in five seconds, and the lady, unseated, was on the ground, wildly alarmed but not injured; the timid mustang had thrown her in its sudden fright.

She arose and fled toward her mustang, but the treacherous animal galloped away and halting a hundred yards distant, tossed her head and regarded the strange man wildly.

"Fear not, senorita—fear not; I am a friend."

"A friend? Who are you?"

"Pedro Felipe, senorita. Do you need assistance?"

"Oh, yes, sir; I am in great trouble. I am lost from my friends. I was chased by Indians last night. I am very hungry and tired; I have not tasted food since yesterday at noon."

Pedro, eying her admiringly, noticed her sweet face was pale and worn. Ever ready to assist a fellow-creature, he started toward the entrance.

"Enter, senorita, enter. But stay," he added in a low tone; "do you see anything on the other side of the hill?"

"No, sir—nothing. No one is visible."

"It is well. Senorita, if you will come in here you will find food, such as it is. There are blankets, also, if you need rest."

But she hung back. She feared to enter that strange, yawning hole with this man, even if he did look and act like an honest man.

"My pony, Dimple," she said, hesitatingly.

"I am afraid she will go astray."

"Never fear, senorita—I will bring her back to you if she does."

"But—but—"

"Ah, I perceive, senorita—you wrong me. I have been too long a companion and servant of my kind master in Mexico—Senor Martinez—to harm a lady. I—"

"Why, are you the Pedro that lives at the grand old place? Why, our farm was quite close to it! My father is Mr. Wheeler."

"Ah! then I am fortunate in having an opportunity to serve you."

"Then you will help me to find my friends?"

"Assuredly, senorita. Come in and rest. My accommodations are poor, but they are better than none. Come in, senorita."

No longer she feared to enter that forbidding aperture, but led by Pedro, walked in. The mustang, seeing her mistress disappear, came slowly toward the entrance.

"Why, what a dismal, gloomy place," said Kissie, timidly halting at the entrance. "What is it—who lives here?"

"It is an old outlaw den," replied Pedro. "But no outlaws occupy it now—its only resident is your servant."

Much she marveled, but she did not ask any questions, as she was faint from lack of nourishment. Pedro, for security's sake, led her into the second chamber, and shaking up the tattered, musty blankets, bade her rest while he procured food, he going out for the purpose.

She reclined on the soft blankets, greatly surprised at the strange events in which she had participated. But she did so unaccompanied by any feelings of alarm or of grief, for now she had found a haven of rest.

She sunk into a dreamy doze, delicious for its being indulged in perfect safety.

Pedro, as he cooked his bit of venison (he had killed an antelope when on the Gila) reflected and pondered, and his thoughts shaped themselves into words.

"She is asleep—I can hear her breathe. It is strange, very strange, that she did not see it. It was no mistake of mine, that I know. What, then, was it? The Trailer's ghost?"

He shuddered, strong man as he was, and going to the entrance, looked out. Still the hot breeze came from the south, still the hot sun stared down upon the yellow plain, still all was quiet. Only the mustang was in sight, browsing at a little distance, with his head turned toward the east.

"I must lariat that mustang," said Pedro. "There are too many Indians about for him to show our retreat. Yes, I will lariat him."

So, making a running-noose at one end, he coiled his lariat, and taking the coil in his hand, began to swing it over his head.

It did not leave his hand. Just before he got ready to let it fly, a voice close by said:

"Aim well, Pedro Felipe."

He started, dropped his rope, and stared round. He was alone—no one had spoken. Was it imagination?—the mustang still browsed—she had not heard it. It was a false alarm.

Again he picked up his rope. Again the voice spoke, this time harshly:

"Take care, Pedro!"

Dropping his rope, he flew to the summit and looked over the plain. No one was in sight—no apparition, no Indian, no human being.

Then with a pale face he darted toward the entrance, with the ejaculated words:

"The voice of the Trailer!"

The trap-door rung harshly as he slammed it to from the inside. The mustang heard the sound, tossed his head, and galloped away a short distance, then stopped and looked at the hillock.

It was bare—no one was in sight. Relieved of her sudden fear, she dropped her head and grazed again. The sun slowly set over the Land of Silence.

Who spoke?

The man with the black plume in his conical hat.

CHAPTER VII.

"APACHES!"

THE pursuing band wound away over the plain, now, at four hours from sunrise, invisible from the banks of the Gila.

They were, as has been said, divided into two separate parties. That of Colorado Jack the Tiger was in advance, the riders urging on their steeds at a swift amble. The wagons behind under charge of Burt Scranton, rattled along merrily, drawn by horses kept at a slow trot.

"I say," said Jack, as they trotted on, "we are nearly into the Land of Silence, now, ain't we?"

This remark was addressed to the guide. He nodded.

"And now we've got to look out for Apaches."

"No 'Patchies hyar."

"Yes, there are."

"I know better. Never come inter this kentry. Too dry."

"Well, there are Apaches prowling about now—that I know to be a fact."

"Know more'n I do, then."

"You bet I do. Hooray! three cheers for the man who can clean out a whole jail full of prize-fighters; a tiger for the stoutest, smartest man in the world. I can thrash a jungle full of gorillas, myself. I tell you, I'm the man that can't be fazed, myself; and I'm the cock of the walk."

"I'm sick of that durned braggin'," growled Simpson. "Heerd nothin' else sence I fu'st see'd yer."

"And you are liable to continue hearing it, too."

"Durn me ef I kain't stop it."

"Yes you can—with a big copper."

"Well, I kin."

"Le's see you try it."

"Hark!" suddenly cried Carpenter. "Was not that a gun-shot?"

The friendly disputants ceased their strife, and halting and turning in their saddles, listened long and earnestly. The train was not in sight, having descended into a sort of dry slough which ran across the plain.

"False alarm!" declared Simpson, turning to continue the trail. But Colorado Jack disagreed with him.

"Tim, I saw Apache Jack up by Comanche Rock day before yesterday, and he warned me of a band of Apaches who were out on a

maraud, down in this direction. What he says is gospel."

"Durned ef it ain't! I giv' in," said Simpson. His confidence in Apache Jack was unlimited.

"The old boy was looking rather fazed," continued Jack. "He told me he had only just given them the slip, after a run of thirty miles."

"Hark!" sharply commanded Mr. Wheeler. "I'm sure I heard a gun behind."

"I thought I did, too," said Sam.

A puff of white smoke arose from the crest of a small knoll, half a league behind; then a man was seen to spring on the summit and wave his hat frantically.

The eagle eye and electric brain of Colorado Jack took in the situation at once. He struck his steel spurs sharply into the blood bay's flanks.

"Come on!" he shouted, galloping toward the gesticulating man. "There's something wrong with the train. Come on! follow the tiger-cat!"

They followed, pell-mell, plying the spur. As if cognizant of the importance of speed, the horses bent their heads and fairly flew; while their riders kept their eyes upon the man on the knoll.

Suddenly he disappeared and a new object came in sight. Afar off on the plain, beyond the invisible train, came a man on a galloping animal. He was followed by another and more, all shooting out from behind a distant ridge.

"'Patchies!" yelled Simpson. "They air a-makin' fur the train!"

The guide was right. The train was halted behind the knoll, and the Apaches were galloping toward it. They had evidently been following the trail, as they were coming from the southeast.

"Hurry!" cried Sam. "We will have to fly to save the train." And as he spoke he bent over his "clay-bank's" neck as if to accelerate his speed.

Suddenly the coming Apaches, now about a half-mile distant, drew up their mustangs, and grouping, stared keenly at the train. They had seen the horsemen suddenly arrive to sustain the small band they were swooping down upon.

Colorado Jack was in his element. Taking with the characteristic promptness of a veteran Indian-fighter, advantage of their hesitation, he sprung from his horse.

"Now, fly 'round!" he commanded. "Stir your stumps, you fellows!" pointing to the Canadians. "You, Louis, drive your team ahead ten feet!"

The man obeyed, quieted by the magnetic influence which Jack always possessed when in danger.

"Now, Duncan—blast your nervous, excitable bide!—drive alongside Louis!"

But Duncan paid no attention, searching, in an agony of haste, for his lost knife.

Burt promptly performed his task. The other Canadian, with more coolness than the other drivers, seeing what was desired, waited for no orders, but drove his wagon in a line with the others.

"Now all hands get to work and unhitch the horses. Don't be in a hurry; buckles can't be managed without coolness and deliberation."

The men went to work with dispatch, yet coolly, and in a few moments the horses were detached from the wagons.

"Now, you drivers take the horses aside, and the rest of us will draw the wagons together."

The Canadians did as commanded, and the remainder drew the wagons together; then the horses were tied firmly to the wheels on the side next the knoll. Now they were in quite a snug and secure fort, with a barricade of wagons in front, and a small hill behind.

After this short but highly necessary work was finished, Colorado Jack looked closely at his rifle, desiring the others to do the same. He carefully reloaded his "Colt's six-shooters," and laid them before him on the wheel-hub.

"Now, boys," he said, "we are in tolerable circumstances for the present, but there is no knowing how long we will remain so. Rot those cussed devils out there! There's an army of 'em!"

"Fifteen," corrected Simpson.

"Fifteen to seven. Oh! that ain't as bad as it might be."

"What a large fellow that is yonder, to one side," observed Carpenter, indicating a powerful, stalwart savage, prominent among the rest.

"Cheyenne," remarked the guide, taking a huge bite from a "plug o' navy," which he always carried.

"Comanche!" corrected Jack. "He's no Apache—he isn't built like one. Tear my lion's heart out, but I believe I know him," he suddenly added.

"Durned ef I don't, too!" declared Simpson, watching him narrowly.

"It's Red-Knife, the renegade."

"K'rect!"

"Who is he?" inquired Mr. Wheeler.

"Red-Knife, the Comanche renegade—a notorious, murdering old rat!" replied Jack. "He's the worst Indian on the plains, and 'give up' is something he does not know. Kicked out of his own tribe he joined the Apaches, and since has gained a reputation for cruelty and cunning far above any of the others."

"We are in danger, then."

"Danger! Well, I should remark. But look yonder—what in the name of Colorado Jack, the cock of the walk, does that painted devil mean?"

All eyes were turned at once toward the savages. Before stationary, they were now prancing and capering about, spreading like a bird's wing, then folding again, ever prancing and curvetting. Only the chief, Red-Knife, remained at rest. After seeing his brother Ishmaelites wheel and curve about him for some time, he dismounted, cast his weapons on the ground, and slowly stalked toward the barricade.

"He's a fool!" whispered Burt to Sam, as he drew within rifle-range. "Fu'st thing he'll know, he'll find hisself dead, if ever Simpson or t'other draws bead on him."

"He's going to palaver," remarked Jack.

The savage drew quite close, until he halted

within long pistol-range. Then, spreading his arms and throwing back his head, he cried out:

"Are the pale-faces women, that they seek to hide? Are they coyotes, that they burrow when danger comes? Are they fools, that they know not that Red-Knife is the chief of the plains—that he is not to be foiled?"

He spoke in the Spanish tongue in a good tone and accent. Long intercourse with the Mexicans had improved his tongue.

"I'll put a stopper to his mouth!" declared Jack, bending and creeping through the wagons. Then, standing in full view before the chief, he cried, brandishing his rifle:

"Get back to your howling crew, you Comanche renegade dog! Get back, or I'll send you in a hurry."

He turned and fled, dodging and darting from side to side to avoid Jack's bullet, which he knew would speed after him. It did.

Enraged, Colorado Jack leveled his rifle and glanced over the sights. The gun belched its smoke and fire, the chief dodged at the very moment, and the bullet razed the black feather which nodded on his painted head, and sped harmlessly on.

Running like a deer, he speedily regained his mustang and his band, and mounting spoke several hasty words to his clustered braves, gesticulating wildly.

The next moment they separated—one band of seven starting away toward the north, while the other, with the chief, rode west a few yards, and drawing as near as they dared, halted, facing the whites.

"Now it has come right down to business, and we'll have to look sharp," growled Jack.

CHAPTER VIII.

GIVE AND TAKE.

COLORADO JACK, the Tiger, carefully reconnoitered the position of the Indians. The chief's band still remained drawn up in line, facing them like soldiers on a dress-parade; the other was not in sight.

"This won't do," remarked Jack. "We must keep an eye on those devils who rode round back of us. First thing we know the whole gang will come whooping on us. That'll never do—we must keep them off."

"But how are we going to do that?" inquired the Canadian.

Jack became nettled.

"Why, peep over the top of the hill, to be sure."

"But they will shoot us—Red-Knife's band."

"Oh, they will try! I know I'm the crack shot of these plains, and I can't hit a man three-quarters of a mile off with a carbine that won't kill at three hundred yards. They darsn't come within half a mile to shoot, so we are safe from that quarter. There's no time to be lost; those red fools may be crawling up the other side of the hill for all we know."

So saying, he coolly left the wagons, and deliberately walked up the hillside. He was greeted with a volley from Red-Knife's band, but the bullets fell far short; the short Mexican carbines were useless at long range.

He slackened his pace as he drew near the

summit, and dropping on all-fours, crept up to the top, and peered quickly but cautiously over. Then he rose to his feet, and with a surprised look gazed over the plain.

"What is it, Jack?" demanded the guide.

"Tear my ten-ton heart out if there's an Apache in sight on this side."

"That so?"

"It's a fact. Come up here and see, if you don't believe it."

The guide grasped his rifle and started toward the summit. The rest followed.

"Stay back, every one!" commanded Jack. "Two's enough up here. You stay back and keep the renegade at a distance."

They obeyed, and Simpson mounted the hill and stood beside Jack.

"Tbo't yer said yer kedn't see nuthin'?" remarked the former.

"So I did, and you can't either."

"Kin, too."

"Where?"

"Yonder. See that black speck movin' long toward the east, a hundred yards ter the right?"

"Yes."

"That's an Apache's top-knot, an' he's skulkin' along an arroyo."

"Simpson, you always did have sharp eyes."

The guide received the compliment quietly, and resumed:

"Arroyo bends ter the right jest thar, an' every one o' them red devils is a-crawlin' round ter sneak in ter us. Call the men hyar an' giv' 'em a volley when they come in sight. We kin pick off the lot."

The men were called just in time. Just as the savages rounded the bend and arrived in full view each man chose a savage and all fired simultaneously. They were all good shots, and the effect was marked.

Five of the seven Apaches threw up their arms and with loud cries reeled and fell dead. The other two went back into the arroyo like rabbits.

"Well done!" cried Jack. "Hallo! look out—there comes Red-Knife. Pull your revolvers and don't shoot too quick. Get under cover lively now!"

They rushed down the hill again, and crept behind the wagons. Red-Knife had seen the fatal volley and defeat of his men and was frenzied with rage. At the head of the whooping, screeching pack he rode, intent upon a sudden charge while they were exposed.

"Load your guns, men!" cried Jack. "Don't be in a hurry—there's plenty of time. Hurrah! we are the cocks of the walk, the men that can't be beat."

The two parties were equally matched now, the savages only numbering one more than the whites. But this did not defer Red-Knife from making a charge. He had lived long with the whites and had partially avoided the savage style of warfare for that of the white men.

On the yelling pack dashed, screaming hideously and rending the air with their shrill whoops. The men behind the wagons lay quiet, and having all reloaded, sighted across their long rifles, coolly.

Suddenly the approaching pack divided, part going to the right, and part to the left, swerv-

ing by, beyond sure rifle aim. Never apparently noticing their enemies, they rode on at a keen run until they had half-completed the circuit of the camp.

"By thunder!" shouted Simpson. "Climb inter the wagons, boys—they air goin' ter fire criss-cross."

"A cross-fire!" ejaculated Jack. "Pile into the wagons, boys—lively now."

As it happened, the guide and Sam were in the same wagon with Colorado Jack. In the next, and center one, were the remainder, huddled in the bottom, to escape the bullets which would easily pierce the canvas-cap tents.

"Blast it! the horses will git shot—every blamed one of 'em," declared Simpson, in disgust. "They've got a fair square aim at 'em—rot their red hides. Cuss an Injun, anyhow. Thar's no knowin' what they'll do, nor when they'll do it."

A rejoinder was made in the shape of a bullet which "sung" through the wagon-cover, just above his head; he dodged, and growled.

For a few moments a perfect hailstorm of bullets rattled against the wagons, but no one was struck; then they ceased to bury themselves in the woodwork.

"They've emptied their barrels," Jack said, with a contemptuous smile. "The more fools they—now just stick your heads out, boys, and pepper 'em while they can't return it!" he added in a loud voice.

"Le's both go fur Red-Knife," whispered the guide.

"Ay! we can't both miss him."

Hastily throwing up the wagon-cover, they took a quick aim and fired. However, the wily savage saw the movement, and slipping behind his mustang, eluded the bullets, which, close together, whistled through the air where his body had been but a moment before.

One bullet whistled by the renegade's head and lodged in that of a short, malicious warrior, who rolled from his horse, dead. Another struck Red-Knife in the leg, they could tell, as he twitched it suddenly, then clapped his hand upon it. A yell from the other band caused them to look toward it. A gaunt, tall savage started up in his saddle, gazed wildly round for a moment, then his mustang galloped away, riderless; two savages the less.

Suddenly the savages rode back to their former position, and clustering together, gesticulated energetically. The whites could not hear, but knew that they were engaged in a discussion.

Only a few moments they talked and gestured, then they turned their mustangs' heads to the southwest.

Dismounting from his mustang, Red-Knife stalked toward the whites for a few rods; then he cried:

"The Red-Knife is a brave—he seeks not to war with dogs and cowards. The sounds of war come from the south; there will the Comanche go to war with braves—he leaves pale-face dogs to their own cowardly deeds. The Red-Knife has spoken."

Colorado Jack sprung out of the wagon into the open plain. The chief recognized him.

"Dog from the Bitter River!" he cried, with

an insulting gesture; "coward of a coyote, squaw, sneak, the Red-Knife laughs at you."

"I'm Colorado Jack, the grizzly-tamer! I'm the man that killed cock-robin! I'm the jumping wild-cat from Bitter Creek! I'm the man that can run faster'n a jack rabbit, swear more than a camp-cook, neigh more than an elephant, and kill thieving Indians like the small-pox. I'm the Grand Mogul of Tartary, and I'm the cock of the walk."

The chief turned, stalked back to his steed, mounted and rode away with his band toward the south; clustered together, riding swiftly.

"I say, Simpson, what does all this mean?" inquired Mr. Wheeler.

"Dunno."

"Haven't you any idea?" asked Sam.

"No."

"I have—a pretty sure one," replied Jack.

"What is it?"

"You know Apache Jack told me the other day, at Comanche Creek, that thirty Apaches chased him thirty miles or more?"

"Yes."

"Well, he said Red-Knife was the chief of the band. Now, the skunk had only fourteen here besides himself—fifteen in all. That shows there has been a division for some reason or other. Now he's bound south to fetch the bulk of the band to help him. He will be back in twenty hours, depend upon it—then look out."

"I think you are wrong," said Burt Scranton.

"If Red-Knife was goin' ter fetch the rest of his gang, he'd leave some one hyar ter keep an eye on us."

"Jest whar *you're* wrong," declared Simpson.

"We leave a big trail behind us—I tell *you*. It'll be mighty easy fur him ter foller it. He takes his hull gang ter make us b'lieve he's gone fur good—the old badger. But I b'lieve we kin outwit him yet."

"How?" was the general question.

"Jest this 'ere way: 'bout ten miles north is a bigger hill nor this—a hill kivered with loose rocks. Thar's a devilish peart place ter make a stand thar—and it's only three miles from the sweetest water yer ever tasted—Alkali Creek. It's what them fellers that think they know so much when they don't know nuthin'—book-writers—call a subter-rain again stream."

"Subterranean," corrected Sam. "Alkali Creek does not, by its name, give any great promise."

"Wal, thar's good water thar; it ain't very cold, but it's sweet, and that's the main thing."

"I believe we would make a strike by going," added Colorado Jack. "I know the hill—it is a strange place. Men have been seen to ride up to it and suddenly disappear, and all efforts to find them have been useless. However, for a year, there's been nothing wrong about it, and I, for one, move we go as quick as we can. The sun is only three or four hours high, and time is scarce. Besides, we may find the young miss there."

Mr. Wheeler groaned, and Carpenter looked gloomy, but they both agreed with Jack. Of course the rest were bound to follow them.

The hasty resolve was soon put in execution. The horses were watered from the butt and attached to the wagons; the drivers mounted their

saddles, and the horsemen trotted away, past the ghastly red bodies, past the coyotes, under the wheeling vultures, bound for the Hillock.

CHAPTER IX.

GONE—GONE!

ON that same afternoon, and about sunset or a little later, Pedro was eating a frugal supper in the hollow billock with Kissie.

The supper was plain—the remnants of a venison dinner and some dried meat which Pedro carried in his haversack. The torch threw a feeble, flickering light over the gloomy apartment; an insect droned a funeral dirge close by in some cranny; the horse close by stamped and chewed his grain, and the sound of the mustang's hoofs outside were dull and heavy; night was drawing on.

"Hist, senorita!" Pedro suddenly whispered, with uplifted hand. "Surely I heard a voice."

They listened; all was quiet.

They were about resuming their meal when the mustang outside snorted and galloped away; something had alarmed her.

"Something is at hand," said Pedro. "Stay here, senorita, while I peep out. Do not be alarmed; I will not leave you."

"Oh, I pray it is my father—pray God it is," she replied, with a lightened heart.

"Perhaps it is; I hope so, senorita. But I must go—I am sure I hear the voice again."

Though inwardly quaking, Pedro's exterior was cool; his features betrayed no fear. Though never doubting that if he looked out he should again see the fearful apparition, he picked up his gun and squeezing through the interior passage, stalked to the door and peeped out.

"Hello! thar's her mustang," he heard a strange voice say, and a moment later several men rode round the hill. He was relieved at finding they were flesh and blood, and not his ghastly enemy, and using his eyes sharply, scanned them.

They were three in number. One a middle-aged man, with a careworn expression and haggard face, was drearily peering round about him. Close behind him, on a "clay bank" horse, sat a handsome young man, speaking to him in a low tone, evidently endeavoring to cheer him. The third was a burly, stout man, on a powerful "States horse." The reader is well aware who they are—the party of searchers.

But Pedro did not know them, and though strongly suspecting their identity, was not the man to trust to appearances or jump at conclusions. He resolved to wait and watch.

"Here comes the guide and Colorado Jack," remarked Carpenter, pointing over the plain. "And the wagons are at hand, too; we will soon be strongly encamped."

Mr. Wheeler made no rejoinder save a sigh.

By the gaze of his two comrades, Pedro judged the guide and Colorado Jack were at hand. The latter he had often heard of, but had never seen. His supposition proved correct; a rattle of wheels was heard, three white-capped wagons rounded the hill and drew up by the three horsemen, and simultaneously two men came round the opposite side, mounted, the one on a mustang and the other on a powerful deep-bay.

Though the twilight had almost given place to night, yet Pedro recognized the former of the two horsemen—the guide.

His first impulse was to rush out and grasp his old "pardner" by the hand; but a second thought changed his mind.

"They might become alarmed and shoot me," he reflected. "I will make myself known."

"But stay," he resumed. "I might as well see to my treasure—I don't know all of those men; there might be a knave among them."

The precious bag still lay covered with the saddle, the water-buckets and the blankets.

He had dug the gold from a hole close by. It was not refilled, and taking the bag he placed it in its former hiding-place, and then threw the concealing articles over it; for the present they were safe.

Then going to the closed trap door he placed his lips to a chink, and whispered: "Tim Simpson."

Intending to give Kissie a glad surprise, he lowered his voice so she could not hear him from the other chamber.

"What's wanted?" growled the guide supposing one of his party was the speaker. He received no rejoinder. Pedro whispered again:

"Simpson—old friend."

"Well, spit it out!" sharply spoke the guide.

"Don't whisper 'Simpson' all day."

"Who spoke?" asked Burt.

"Dunno."

"I heard a whisper," said Jack.

"So did I; and I," added several.

"Didn't any o' yer fellers speak ter me?"

"No—no."

"Durned curious. I heerd a whisper, sart'in."

"So did all of us," said Sam.

Pedro spoke a trifle louder.

"Simpson, here I am—Pedro Felipe," and he boldly emerged from the hill.

Astounded, the party started back, then leveled their guns, believing him immortal, his appearance was so sudden and unexpected. Pedro, seeing his danger, dropped prone to the earth. He was not too soon, for, staggered and alarmed, several fired at him; but his presence of mind saved his life.

Rushing rapidly to Simpson, he sprung behind his mustang to avoid being shot, as several guns were aimed at him.

"Simpson—have you forgotten me? I am your old friend, Pedro."

The guide recognized him and sprung from his mustang. He was too old a hunter and guide to remain surprised for any length of time.

"Gee-wiz!" he cried, scrambling about in a mad wrestle with the Mexican. "Durn yer old Greaser soul! gee-mini, cry-mini! Hooray! doggon me ef it ain't Pedro!"

"Colorado Jack," said the guide, "here's the sharpest, cutest, patientest man in the kentry. Durn yer braggin' eyes, git off of yer hoss and greet him."

"Pedro Felipe!" cried Jack, dismounting, "you are a Greaser, but a first-class fellow I've heard. Shake the vise of the cock of the walk and the terror of the grizzlies. Put your hand there, you villain."

"Colorado Jack, I, too, have heard of you frequently as a boasting, vaunting knave, with more tongue than strength or brains. I hope you will die with your boots on," replied Pedro, shaking his hand cordially.

"Where did you come from, Pedro?" asked Jack. "Darn me, I was scared—I was for a fact."

"Out of the hill yonder."

"Glory hallelujurum! there is a hole. What in the name of Colorado Jack the thoroughbred from Bitter Creek, were you doing in there?"

Pedro pointed to the mustang, Dimple, grazing at a distance. "Do you see that mustang?" he asked.

Mr. Wheeler sprung from his horse, followed by Sam and Burt. Rushing to Pedro, he cried, seizing him by the shoulder:

"For God's sake, where is my daughter? Tell me, sir, quickly!"

Pedro was a man of few words. In answer, he pointed quietly to the dark aperture in the hillside.

"Where? I do not see her. Sir, you joke with me."

"No, he don't, nuther," surlily put in the guide. "He ain't that kind of a man, let me tell yer."

"Perhaps he means there is a cave in the hill," suggested Carpenter.

"Just so, senor; she is there."

They stopped not to parley, or to demand an explanation of his sudden appearance, albeit they were greatly surprised; but one and all dismounting, rushed to the cave entrance.

But Pedro, suddenly alarmed for his treasure's safety, sprung before the hole. Drawing his beautiful dagger, he cried, hoarsely:

"Stand back! back! you shall not enter."

"But we will!" shouted Carpenter, rushing at him menacingly. The guide put out his foot and dexterously tripped him.

"And, by Judas, yer won't go in if he sez not ter!" he growled, placing himself beside Pedro, and cocking his rifle. "Pedro's my friend, and I'll stan' by him ef I hev ter desert the gang ter do it. Jest count me in, Pedro."

"Let me go in—stand away!" cried Mr. Wheeler, wildly. "I must go in."

The guide put him back with his hands. "Mr. Wheeler, fur the present ye'r' my boss, and a durned good one yer've b'en, too; but Pedro an' me swore ter allust stick to one another, and I'll stick ter him, and fight the party I'm a member of—that's Simpson, the guide."

"Oh, thunder, Simpson! what's the use of keeping a man in suspense? I'm disgusted with you, for a fact."

"Colorado Jack, you an' me hev run ter-gether considerable, but I'll stick ter Pedro, yer may jest bet yer bottom dollar on it. He sez yer shain't go in, and I'll back every durned thing he says. Ef yer don't like it yer can lump it!"

Colorado Jack grew red in the face, and his eyes sparkled. Pedro, knowing a quarrel between these two men would result in the death of one or both of them, hastily said:

"Don't quarrel—keep cool! I'm willing every one should go in—I am even anxious; but I

must go in first. That is the reason I kept you back."

"Wal, why in thunder don't ye go in, then?" demanded Burt. "Thar's no use in talkin' all day, is thar? the old gentleman wants ter see his darter—kain't yer let him in?"

Pedro sheathed his dagger, and saying:

"Certainly—come in," sprung over the small pit in which his treasure was hidden. Then, knowing such a procedure would attract attention, he stepped aside. The men filed quickly in, leaving their horses outside unwatched, and stood blinking in the double twilight inside.

"Christina—Kissie!" cried Mr. Wheeler. "My child, where are you?"

There was silence for a moment. Pedro expected to see Kissie glide gladly from the inner chamber into her father's arms; but she did not appear.

"Strange," he thought. "Is it possible she is sleeping?"

"Well—where is she?" impatiently demanded Carpenter.

"She is in the inner chamber; I was thinking she would come at the sound of her father's voice."

"Where is the inner apartment? lead us there!" clamored the men. Pedro, leaving his treasure, reluctantly stalked toward the narrow passage. They followed eagerly, pressing close upon him. He slipped through and found the torch was extinguished.

"Ha!" he ejaculated.

"What's up?" whispered Simpson, in his ear.

"Curse this black hole—it's dark as a pocket!"

"Where is she? now you have brought us here, where is she? Strike a light! a light! Kissie—Kissie!" cried Mr. Wheeler. They listened. No answering voice sounded, no sound was heard; deathlike stillness, and damp, thick air brooded round.

"Sirs, there is something very strange in this," hollowly whispered Pedro. "I left her here not fifteen minutes since. The torch is where I left it—my hand is upon it; I will strike a light."

The torch flamed redly out as Pedro waving it aloft, peered round the chamber.

He could not see her. With the men strangely affected by some unknown influence, with their weapons drawn, he walked slowly about the narrow chamber, making the entire circuit without success.

"Senors," and his voice, they could perceive, was hollow and quivering—"there have been ugly and strange happenings here to-day. She is not here."

All was silence.

"There is still the first chamber—she may be there; we may have missed her; sirs, this way."

They followed.

In the first chamber again. The torch flickers in the breeze as they walk slowly about after it—a mysterious influence is upon all.

"Sirs—senors—she is not here."

All is quiet, and the torch flares redly. The horses outside are silent—they never stamp, the night breeze is damp, and the torch flickers and flares; all is quiet in the Land of Silence.

A hollow voice is heard; it is Pedro's; he speaks almost in a whisper;

"Senors—sirs—let us go outside."

He stalks away. They follow in utter silence; even the guide and the ranger are under a strange influence. They emerge into the open air.

Pedro, the guide, and Colorado Jack stood on the summit of the hill and peered round in the darkness. The twilight had given place to night, yet they could see some distance, the atmosphere was so clear.

The guide and the ranger went slowly down the hill, with subdued faces, into the throng below. Pedro remained above with his torch.

The mustang now trotted toward him, snorting and tossing her mane; he watched her, flaring the torch for a better view.

Suddenly she screamed shrilly and galloped rapidly away. At the same instant Pedro saw a form approaching. He waved the torch.

The form drew near, and he perceived it was that of a colossal horseman. He slightly stooped and held his torch aloft. He drew nearer, and strangely his horse's feet gave out no sound. The men below were on the opposite side of the hill.

Suddenly the horseman loomed up as if by magic, and Pedro, with a wild cry, started to his feet. The horseman wheeled and was riding away at a gallop into the darkness—in thirty seconds he was invisible. Pedro for a moment stood stupefied, and no wonder, for in that colossal form, on the powerful black horse, under the conical hat with a black plume, rode the *Trailer*.

For a moment only he stood semi-paralyzed, then, with a wild cry, and waving his torch, he sprung down the hill. Into the aperture he went, and with trembling, eager hands tore away the coverings of his treasure.

Off came the saddle, then the water-bucket, aside went the blankets, and his arm plunged into the hole.

Standing in the entrance, they saw him rise, reel, stagger, and fall directly under his horse's hoofs with a wild cry, and a brief, hoarsely-yelled sentence. Then Pedro fainted, with the echo of his cry ringing and dying through the gloomy cavern:

"Gone—gone—all gone!"

They rushed in and lifted him up, the guide first. With voice trembling and hollow in spite of himself, he said:

"Gentlemen, thar's su'thin' wrong 'bout this cursed, ugly black hill; the strongest, coolest, bravest man in the world has fainted clean away—dead away!"

"And the girl—where is she?—she is gone," muttered Colorado Jack.

"She is gone—gone!"

CHAPTER X.

WORSE YET.

THE guide, lifting the torch, looked round on a small band of vaguely frightened, nervous men.

The secret of this alarm was this—they all had heard that a once feared and malignant robber, who had been dead about a year, was roaming nocturnally about the Land of Silence. Knowing him to be dead, they were satisfied it was his ghost.

Nine o'clock. Now Pedro was sitting up, supported by the faithful guide, and plied and harassed with questions he chose not to answer. He told of Kissie's appearance at the cave, of his conversation with her, of the way in which she had occupied herself during the time she had been with him, of the last he saw of her, where she was and what she was doing; but why he came, when he arrived, what he tarried for, and what he had seen, he refused to tell. He was firm and decided, though his nerves were shaken considerably.

Mr. Wheeler was overwhelmed and in a semi-stupor, and Carpenter was alarmed for his health. After being so near his loved daughter, after almost touching her and being within ear-shot, the shock of the sudden disappearance had unmanned him, and he sunk into a state of imbecility.

Carpenter, loving Kissie and grieving for her, was more in a state to appreciate his sufferings than any one else, and did his best to comfort him.

Ten o'clock. The group was gloomy and quiet, each one sitting or lying on the ground, some smoking, others chewing, and all reserved and moody. No watch outside had been set, as they were all strangely stupefied by the recent strange events.

Between eleven and twelve o'clock there was a slight movement outside among the horses, and a succession of stampings ensued; but it was soon quieted, involuntarily, and was still again.

Colorado Jack, growing weary of the dead calm in the cell-like chamber, rose to his feet and started toward the door. As he did so, a clamor arose outside. A mare screamed viciously, stamping; a shrill "nicker" came from a horse, and there was at the same moment a sound of rushing and galloping hoofs.

He sprang to the trap and peered out, then yelled shortly!

Swarming round among the stationary train were over a score of running, twisting, gliding Indians, overrunning the wagon, busily engaged in unhitching the draft-horses, while more were galloping over the plain, striving to lariat the saddle-horses, which had taken fright and galloped away. They were busy as bees, and were swarming round like them. Thirty running, robbing Indians make a larger show than fifty whites, they are so much more agile and quick.

Selecting a burly knave close by, who was trying to burst a stout tobacco caddy, he took a long, deliberate aim and fired, then drawing his Colt's six-shooter, commenced firing rapidly, yelling like a demon.

The large Indian fell dead on his breast, with a gurgling groan; and the precise and correctly-aimed revolver wounded two more, who dropped, then rose and staggered away.

Like magic the work of plunder ceased. Individually dropping their occupations, the savages sharply looked around for the cause of the sudden and fatal volley, but as Jack had slunk back into the cave they saw nothing. Then they became wildly alarmed, all their hereditary superstitions crowding one upon another, and began to retreat.

Colorado Jack strove to organize his men, in order to make a sudden onslaught, which would be more efficacious than a volley from the hill, as the savages would be frightened out of their wits at seeing them rise from the ground.

"Give 'em a volley before they get away!" he cried, leveling his reloaded rifle and firing. The guide, Sam and Burt, followed his example, but only one shot took effect—a retreating savage rolled from his mustang, which sprung away riderless. The others were too surprised to fire.

Jack started out into the plain.

"Jerusalem! look at 'em skedaddling off with every cussed draft-horse. Whew! mount as quick as you can, boys, and after 'em. Lively, now!"

Finally Simpson succeeded in lariatting his mustang, and then mounting, soon collected the rest. Then the majority of the horsemen rode away in pursuit, leaving the rest to search in the cave for the lost girl.

The pursuers were Jack, Simpson, Carpenter, Burt and Louis Robidoux; the remainder were Mr. Wheeler, Duncan, Napoleon Robidoux and the half-stupefied and almost useless Pedro.

The latter party watched the others till they were lost in the far distance. Then they turned toward the cave.

"We are in for it," remarked Robidoux, in a low tone to Duncan. "What if more of these mean Indians should come? We'd be the only ones fit to fight 'em."

Duncan broke out vehemently:

"They went away and never told me whether they'd be back to breakfast. Now, blast the luck! if I cook up a lot of grub for the whole party, and they ain't here to eat it, the things'll all spile, and then I'll catch thunder for being extravagant and wasteful. And if I don't cook for the lot, they'll be sure to come back, and then there'll be a fuss 'cause breakfast ain't ready."

"Oh! never mind the breakfast; there are other things more important than that, just now."

The cook stared at him aghast.

"Other things more im-port-ant to look after! Oh, every hair of my head! Oh, my boot-heels! Oh, if I didn't get breakfast to-morrow, what a swearing, red-hot mess there'd be—every man a-cussing me. You never! was a camp cook—you don't know what it is."

"It's the softest job in the train."

"Say that again and I'll knock you down! Great Cæsar! If I wanted to have the sweetest revenge on an enemy I'd condemn him to cook all his life for a camp. He'd go crazy—every hair in his head would turn gray in a few months. It is always cook, do this—cook, do that; cook, when's dinner going to be ready? There ain't enough biscuits, cook—why didn't ye make more? You never make the coffee strong enough, cook—why don't ye make it stronger? Cook, go fetch some drinking-water! just as if I war a slave. No wonder I'm cross; who ever saw a camp cook that wasn't? Nobody.

"And then if a meal ain't ready to a second, how I'm sworn at and cursed. Cook, what makes you always behind? you are never on time. Then when it is ready, then comes the

music—a regular dirge to me. One grumbling rascal says the meat ain't cooked; another swears 'cause thar's gnats in the coffee—just as if I could go round catching bugs like a boy with a butterfly net. Bimeby they'll be wanting ice cream, jelly, chocolate, oranges, mattresses to sleep on, and a waiter for every one. They'll be wanting linen shirts, kid gloves, and a boot-black bimeby—I wouldn't be at all surprised if they should beg for ottomans, easy-chairs, and musketo-bars—not a bit."

The Canadian, seeing he was in a fever, no further aggravated him by continuing the conversation, but glancing over the plain, said:

"There are three horses yet—no, two, that are loose. Can you throw a lariat, cook?"

"No, I can't—and what's more, I ain't a-going to. I'm up every morning before daylight, cooking while you lazy fellows are snoring; then I drive team and wash dishes at the same time—I ain't cross-eyed, and the result is I go slap into some hole, then get cussed. Then at noon you fellers roll on your lazy backs and see me cook, cook; and each one is always wanting me to cook a dish just the way some one else don't want it done. Then it's wash dishes and drive team again all the afternoon; a cross-eyed man could do it well enough, but I can't. Then I'm washing dishes long after every one's asleep at night, and am expected to turn out every morning a little after midnight and go to work, work again. No, sir; if you want the horses brought up, you can do it yourself, for I can't and won't."

"All right, Duncan. You do have a hard time, that is a fact. Go in now, and get some sleep, and I'll try my hand at catching the horses."

Duncan went inside and found Pedro and Mr. Wheeler both in a semi-stupor, from different causes, while Robidoux took a lariat and started away toward the black horse and the mustang, Dimple.

Silence reigned over the level plain as the Canadian walked rapidly toward them with his lariat in his hand. He looked carefully over the plain—nothing was in sight; he was alone on the plain in the Land of Silence.

He halted, as a thought struck him, hesitated a moment, then went on.

Once more he looked around on the sunlit plain—once more he moved on.

The black horse ceased his browsing as he drew near, and looked at him fixedly; something at that moment occurred to Robidoux.

"Pedro's horse is in the cave," he whispered to himself; "and all the others are gone except Dimple. It is strange—whose horse can it be?"

He went on and drew near. The mustang had moved away quite a distance, and stood snorting and tossing her mane; she was evidently afrighted—what was the matter?

She was gazing at something behind him—he turned. As he did so, he uttered a sharp cry.

A form was coming toward him from the Hillock—a colossal form walking rapidly. A tall hat surmounted his head, and in the hand was a waving plume; a *serape* was over his shoulders, almost concealing his body; he was quite near, being, in fact, only a rod or two distant.

The Canadian knew it was not Pedro, and no man as enormous was of the party besides him except Colorado Jack, and he was away. He trembled; could it be the guide's ghost?

In five seconds he stood face to face with the whitest, ghastliest face, the blackest, keenest eye, and the most terrifying form he had ever seen.

Horror! he was facing, on this moonlight night, *the ghost of the Trailer!*

"You are late on the plain to-night."

They were almost the very words he had spoken to the guide. With a wild cry, and moved by his great terror, he saw the figure stalk toward the black horse, which walked to meet him.

He stopped in the entrance and stared back, then again shrieking, he sprung in and tightly closed the trap; he had seen the mustang, seized with fear, scour away over the plain, and coming toward the hillock on the stalking black horse was the terrible, strange form—*the Trailer's spirit!*

CHAPTER XI.

A REFUGE IN TIME.

AWAY rode the Apaches galloping southeast, leading the captured horses behind them. They rode away minus two braves, with two more fatally wounded, with a paltry prize of twelve aged, heavy horses, whose best run was a mere rapid canter, and who were incumbered with heavy, impeding harness.

Not knowing the nature or number of their foes, they were riding away toward a part of the plain some twenty miles distant, which was traversed by numerous and deep ravines, which in their great number and devious windings afforded excellent shelter.

Behind, but gaining, came five white men, or about one-fifth of the savages, riding faster and quite as directly toward the plain of the ravines. The savages, as they rode over the ground, chatted noisily—these men, too, conversed, but gloomily.

"We cannot distinguish the Apaches—perhaps we are straying from the trail," remarked Louis Robidoux.

"Ain't nuther!" This from the guide, surly.

"How do you know?" asked Sam, spurring to the guide's side.

"Bekase we air goin' ter the eyedetical place whar they're goin'."

"Where is that—to the ravines?"

"Gulches. Dead Man's Gulches."

"Why are they named so strangely?"

"Because a man that gits in thar stands a mighty poor show to git out again. I've seen a man that said he traveled *four days* trying ter git out, and didn't move a mile in the whole time."

"I heard a Mexican tell some whopping yarns about some Dead Man's Gulches, but I didn't believe him; but sence ye say so and back him, why I'll hev ter give in, I reckon," remarked Burt Scranton.

"Wait till ye git thar an' then see fur yourself," suggested the guide. "Durn me ef I want any truck with 'em, you hear ME, gran'-mother?"

"Then you are sure the red-skinned knaves will go to the Gulches?" interrogatively spoke Sam.

"Sartain. They're skeered, and don't know who shot at 'em. Tbar's mighty peert shelter in the Gulches, an' that's whar every Apache fur miles 'round skedaddles ter when he's hard pressed. I'll bet my bottom dollar we'll be sure ter find 'em thar!"

"You, too, Jack?" Colorado Jack nodded.

"Very well; how far distant are they?"

"A matter of fifteen or twenty miles, p'r'aps. About two hours' sharp spurring."

"All right then. Spur up, boys, spur up! Here goes fur the Gulches—hurrah!"

"Hurrah for Dead Man's Gulches!" was the answer, as on they sped.

"Three and a tiger for the catamount-chewers; for the rattlesnake-charmers; for the scorpion-eaters, and for the cocks of the walk!" yelled Colorado Jack, suiting the action (the former one) to the word.

They were given lustily, and the trampled herbage under the ringing hoofs slowly raised to find that the ruthless destroyers were passed on and were rapidly receding from sight.

Two hours later. Now the moon was in the zenith, round, white and gleaming, and the actors in the varying tragedy were passing over a different landscape. The plain, though still level, taken as a whole, was cut into many islands, capes, peninsulas—into all manner of curious shapes by the deceitful ravines and small creeks, called Dead Man's Gulches.

Ever and anon they looked back, and some grinned sardonically, while others frowned and fingered their tomahawks nervously. They were looking at a small party behind who were just entering the Gulches, a mile away, and who were coming boldly and rapidly on in pursuit.

Unlike the savages, they were unincumbered with leading horses, and were able to move much more rapidly. They were also in Indian file, and were headed by Simpson, the guide—now a guide in a useful and important sense, for he was acquainted with many of the mazes in which they were involving themselves.

"Durn my hide!" he growled, as he mounted an eminence.

"Gee-whiz! what a pile of 'em thar is. Gee-whittaker! ef they don't surround us in these durned gulches what a *battue* thar'd be. A surround—it'd be the last of every mother's son of us."

The guide was losing his taciturnity—a sure sign he was in earnest, and so he was.

"We'd better look sharp," resumed Jack.

"Keep your eyes open all of you and see that no red rascal leaves the main pack."

They obeyed his instruction, and leaving the guide to find the way, steadily watched the retreating band.

"Curse the place!" sharply exclaimed Burt, as his horse slipped down a low bank. "It's jest like the old Adirondacks, on a small scale. I'll bet them devils make two rods ter our one."

"No, they don't," said Jack. "They are held

back by our horses—durn 'em. We'll soon catch 'em."

"Then what will we do—they are five to our one, and all armed with good rifles the Government gave them?" queried Sam.

"Fight—we can do nothing else."

"Hullo!" cried Burt, sharply. "The pack ain't quite so big as it was."

They ceased and looked ahead. Surely, the band had diminished one-half at least. The remainder still kept on, though with slackened speed. The guide stopped short.

"It's not any use to go much further—fu't thing we know we'll be inter a big ambushade. Anything but that, say I."

"We can keep on for three or four hundred yards yet, Tim. They've stopped in some big gulch while the rest have gone on. They will lie there to pepper us when we come on and they won't stir. We might get in a volley on them, too, by riding along."

The guide cogitated for a moment. The plan seemed feasible, and accordingly he again bent his eyes to the ground, and the party glided in and out among the gulches.

"Now, fellows, and you 'specially, Robidoux, mind your eye. We ain't on a bare plain, now, but in a devilish mean place. Keep close to Simpson and have your guns cocked and ready. Ride slow, Simpson!"

"Ay, ay!" and as the guide slackened his pace they clustered about him.

"It's no use ter go any further," he said. "Do yer see that big gulch ahead? Wal, yer may bet yer lives that in that black shadder more'n a dozen dirty 'Patchies air watchin' us. We'll stop fur a change, right hyar."

"Here's a splendid place for a stand," said Jack, pointing to a deep fissure adjacent.

"Le's climb for that, and if there's any 'Patchies in the gully, yender, ye'll see how quick they'll come skinning out, when they find out we've found 'em out."

"And we'll rout them out, right out," said the Canadian, mimicking Jack's speech. The latter turned upon him and grasped him by the throat.

"This ain't the first time you've insulted me," he cried, "but, by Judas, it'll be the last."

Huff! a steam of flame shot out from the shadow, a loud report sounded, and a bullet whistled past Jack's head. His timely and sudden change of position had saved his life.

Letting loose the malicious Canadian, he spurred his horse toward the fissure.

"Come on!" he cried, "we are attacked! Yonder's the other pack coming back to help: right down into the gully; now, lively!"

Pell-mell, helter-skelter, they dashed recklessly into the friendly fissure, while simultaneously a hideous, blood-curdling yell rung out from the black, shadowy gulch, and a harmless volley sped over their heads. They were discovered and perhaps entrapped—the fight had arrived, and they were opposed to and harassed by five times their number of wily, cruel, unrelenting foes.

In five minutes the "reach" was swarming with yelling, screeching and bloodthirsty Apaches, forming to pounce upon the devoted band below.

CHAPTER XII.

A MYSTERIOUS SHOT.

AFTER the Canadian had trembled, shuddered and brooded awhile without being alarmed by a second visitation, he began to look into the why and wherefore of it. To follow his vague and erratic mind-wanderings would be a dull task, as he was too terrified and confused to shape his thoughts into any discernible matter.

An hour perhaps passed and it was now the early morning. In the cave the torch cast its flickering light over a dull, gloomy scene. Pedro and Mr. Wheeler lay motionless in a semi-stupor; Duncan muttered disjointedly in his sleep, bewailing and cursing his hard lot; the horse of the Mexican stood in his giant proportions quietly in a corner; and only the Canadian was at all conscious of passing sounds and events. These had not come—were yet to arrive; and arrive they did in no very merry manner.

All had been quiet, Duncan in his heavy sleep forgetting to snore, when the mustang, Dimple, nickered loudly; at the same moment Pedro turned and uneasily muttered:

"The Trailer—my precious, yellow gold."

The Canadian started and springing to his feet glanced round in the darkness as though momentarily expecting a second visitation of the man in the towering hat; but all was quiet, the torch flickered weirdly, and he again sat near the entrance.

"What does he mean?" he soliloquized.

"The Trailer—that means that horrible ghost. And yellow gold—what does that mean? He has seen the specter—that I am satisfied of; it accounts for his strange alarm and apathy; but the gold, the gold—what gold does he mean?"

Another shrill nicker from Dimple outside; in his abstraction he noted it not.

Again the mustang nickered, shriller and wilder than before. Then a wild, unearthly yell broke upon the quiet night air—a yell as if Pandemonium had broken loose. Starting back with fear, he clasped his hands, then ran to the entrance and flung it open.

He closed it as quickly, if not sooner, as a rumbling sound came from behind the hillock, a sound of thundering hoofs, and the hideous yell pealed again; then, as he peeped through a chink, he saw the cause.

Rising like wild-fire, screaming and whooping, came a dozen Indians, charging on the wagons from behind the hill. Clustering together with tossing arms, they rode sloop down upon them. He started down, then ran quickly to Pedro.

"Pedro—Pedro Felipe—wake up—arise; we are charged by Apaches."

At the Apaches, Pedro rose suddenly, from sheer habit, as his eye was vacant, and his air that of a somnambulist; his energy was short-lived, and he sunk down again.

"Pedro—for Heaven's sake get your gun; we are attacked."

"Have you seen it?"

"Seen them? Yes; they are yelling outside—don't you hear them? Come, hurry!"

"Have they got my gold?"

Robidoux was sharp enough to take advantage of this question, and he replied:

"Yes, yes; all of it. Come, hurry!"

Pedro needed no other incentive, but sprung

from his couch and grasped his rifle. Spring toward the door, he hoarsely said:

"Senor, here we go—together; *Caramba!*"

Before Robidoux could stop him he had flung back the trap-door and was standing outside, aiming at a slender Apache just entering a wagon. The broad, dusky back of the savage, in contrast to the moonlit, white wagon-cover, offered a good mark; and quickly sighting the Mexican drew the trigger. The Apache, with a wild yell, sunk back on the wagon-tongue and hung suspended across it, killed immediately. This was a decidedly favorable event; for awakened by the sight of his habitual foe, aroused by his successful shot, Pedro was himself again.

The Canadian smiled as Pedro darted back into the cave, at seeing once more a natural expression on his features. Should he retain his equanimity they had but little to fear beyond the plundering of the train, and that might be prevented for the present, as the whole line of wagons was commanded by the entrance.

The utmost confusion prevailed among the dusky plunderers as the fatal bullet ended their companion's career forever. Some darted behind wagons; some flew to their adjacent mustangs; two clambered into a wagon, while the rest scattered like rabbits, not knowing by whom the shot was fired, or where the precise marksman was stationed.

They were thoroughly alarmed, inasmuch as, not belonging to Red-Knife's band, they had accidentally fallen upon the train. They had been surprised at not finding a human being near the wagons; they were thunder-struck at the mysterious shot and its fatal effect.

Their alarm and surprise were somewhat dissipated very soon by Pedro's firing from a chink in the trap-door. A hole, black and wide, suddenly appeared in the hillside; a stream of flame shot out, a report sounded, and two savages yelled loudly, and, with their comrades, clambered upon the wheels in order to effectually conceal themselves, and protect their bodies from the murderous fire.

"Well done!" remarked Pedro, to his companions, all of whom had taken part in the volley. "We killed none, but made them howl, nevertheless."

Cool, deliberate, noble Pedro was himself again—the far-famed scout and feared Indian-fighter. Now was his brain clear; now were his nerves steady; and the famous master of Indian strategy was rapidly running down his No. 1 buck-shot, with eyes sparkling like a ferret's.

"Senors—sirs, fire not hastily. Keep cool, watch every point, and when you fire be sure and aim."

"I hope they won't hurt any of my tin cups," anxiously muttered Duncan. "We haven't got but five, and one of them leaks. It'll be just like 'em to go and eat all my brown sugar up; oh, my boot-heels! if they do how I'll get cussed."

"Less talking, senor, if you please," gently admonished Pedro.

A few minutes passed, and suddenly Duncan broke out again:

"Every hair of my head! Save it—oh, save it, for Heaven's sake!"

"Save what?" asked Robidoux.

"Don't you see that small stream running down through the wagon-bottom?"

"I see something dark, I think. What is it?"

"Flour! flour! Oh, save it! My boot-heels! won't I get a cussing when I tell 'em they can't have any more biscuit! Everybody 'll swear at me: Cook, I never saw such a clumsy bunch of darned carelessness; cook, the next time you want baffle-chips or fire-wood you can get 'em yourself; never ask me to back water for you again, cook, for I won't do it, you careless, wasteful old cook; then Colorado Jack, or whatever you call him, 'll sure desert, 'cause I couldn't help myself when the Injuns wasted the flour—he, a feller that don't get bread of any kind once a year. Oh, every hair of my head! I'm the cussing-post for the world to swear at—me, the camp cook, a low, thankless dog."

"I will see they are informed of the true state of affairs, now," said Pedro, consolingly.

Duncan burst out, in high dudgeon:

"Think that 'll do any good? think 'ee, think 'ee? Sir, I solemnly swear it!—if you put your hand on the Bible afore an alcalde, or whatever you call him, and swear—yes, sir, swear upon your oath, they'd still cuss me and say I'm the one to blame. Oh, curse the unlucky, miserable day I learned to cook!"

"If any young man should come to me and ask me for advice," he resumed, after a brief pause, "perhaps I couldn't tell him what to do, but I could just naturally tell him what *not* to do. I'd say, young man, don't let any fellow inveigle you into learning the pastry-cook's trade—it'll be the ruin of you. Oh, look at my flour—going all the time."

Duncan, on stopping, observed a change come o'er the face of the grand old strategist. From a cool, impassible calm it had changed to an expression of positive terror, which as quickly vanished, giving, in turn, place to a look of moderate anxiety.

Stepping to the torch, he extinguished it, gazing anxiously to the roof before so doing. Then in the darkness he whispered:

"Senor Wheeler, you will be of more use in guarding the door. Allow me to advise you to look well to it. Men, you two place yourselves by my side, in readiness to fire."

They did so, and he continued:

"I saw, just now, the entire body of Apaches scamper along that longest shadow to the right. They have discovered the hill is only a shell, and will endeavor to force their way into it before daybreak. There are now nine of them and they will at once go to work. There is nothing to be feared—the moon shines so brightly that we can see the slightest crevice they may make."

No longer they watched the wagons in the bright moonlight; but with every confidence in their famous leader, with hands touching his garments, they waited, looking at the small chinks in the roof through which the white sky shone plainly.

Pedro was an infallible prophet when he prophesied, for this reason—he never prognosticated without mature deliberation, always ruled by existing circumstances. Men wondered and marveled, but, superficial themselves, considered it a marvelous power, when, like many other

strange powers (?) it was only the legitimate offspring of two healthy parents—shrewdness and thought.

In this case he was right. Before five minutes had passed a slight noise was heard on one side of the slanting roof, rather low down, a grating, rasping noise.

"They are boring. God grant they haven't got my butcher-knife!" excitedly whispered Duncan in a fever. "Where do you think they are boring with their cussed knives and hatchets?"

Pedro chuckled.

"They are working too low to reach us. There is one part—a quarter—of the hill that is solid. They are boring at that place, ha! ha!"

The rasping continued, growing louder and harsher. The savages were strangely bold and reckless. No other noise was heard, only the same quick, grating sounds—grate, grate—as the metal weapons glanced from the flinty, pebbly soil.

"If they were boring on this side now, they would be nearly through, I judge, by their vigorous, rapid work," observed Pedro. "But, as they are at work on a solid part of the hill, they will get through to us in about a week. Ha! ha! Apaches!" and he laughed tauntingly.

"I wonder where the others are?" interrogatively spoke the Canadian. "They might be in trouble, for all we know."

"Near the Dead Man's Gulch," replied Pedro. "I believe they took that route in pursuit."

"They stand a slim chance of recovering the horses."

"I was not well at the time the attack was made," and if it had been light, a blush would have been seen on Pedro's cheek. "How many did they number?"

"About thirty, I believe," Simpson said.

"Six to one—hum! Well, the odds are certainly against them. If we were only out of this hole now, we might ride to their assistance."

"And leave the girl—the sweet pretty lass?"

"Ah, that is a painful mystery—painful indeed. It quite astounds me."

"Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Carpenter are well-nigh crazy over it. It is lucky in one way that these cussed Apaches have been pestering us—they have kept their thoughts somewhat away from her. Poor Miss Kessie! where has she gone?"

"Hark!"

A loud report came to their ears, and at the same time, though unseen by them, the working Indian, with a loud whoop, fled from the hill. A shriek of agony at the same time resounded from the roof, and a body dropped heavily with a hollow sound.

"By every hair of my head!" cried Duncan, "hear them rascals skedaddle!"

"Who shot?" cried Pedro. "Senor, I say, who shot?"

"It came from inside the hill, I'll take my oath to it!" declared Robidoux.

"I know it did, senor—I know it did," and Pedro's voice showed he was excited. "No one shot here, and some one shot from inside the hill and killed a savage. Who shot?"

They could not tell.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MIRACULOUS ESCAPE.

ON the "reach" above the fissure in which Colorado Jack's hand was concealed, danced and whooped the entire band of Apaches, eager for white blood, and, as prospects appeared, with good chances of getting it. Conspicuous among the painted pack stalked Red-Knife, the renegade, to and fro, cogitating and framing a feasible plan for extermination.

The whites were in an isolated fissure about fifteen feet in depth by twenty wide and one hundred long, in the shape of a horseshoe, the party being ensconced under the bank at the "caulk" in the concavity. Here they were safe for the present, but a small ravine opening from the fissure, rendered their situation precarious. This ravine played an important part in the tragedy, for whose acts the actors were now preparing earnestly.

Where it entered the "horseshoe" fissure, it was narrow, being only about three feet in width, but in a hundred yards it ran under sandy banks, and widened out to forty feet or more. These sandy banks were crumbling and projecting, overhanging the ravine (more properly a "draw") they presented an unstable footing.

Red-Knife noticed this "draw," and at once, without consulting his chiefs, whom he ignored, commenced operations. Detaching a party of three to take charge of the distant draft-horses, he divided his party of twenty into two portions. One of these he directed to creep along the shadow of a projecting bluff until they had made half the circuit of the horseshoe; the other, commanded in person by himself, was to enter the "draw," keeping in shadow as much as possible. Halting in the "draw," they were to give a preconcerted signal, then both parties were to prosecute a cross-fire with what arms they possessed. Such a position would completely command the horseshoe fissure with its hidden occupants.

"Boys," observed Colorado Jack, sitting on a mud-boulder, "this is lovely; but the thoroughbred from Tartary don't scare worth a cent. It takes mighty fine working to face the grizzly domesticator—it does, for a fact."

"Oh, quit yer durned, disgustin' braggin'! It makes me feel ashamed of the hull human race," growled Simpson.

Colorado Jack went on, with a sly twinkle at the guide:

"Educated at college, of good looks, as you can see, engaging manners, I cast rough rowdies like this knave of a guide into the shade. That, you see, makes 'em hot, red-hot; and when I give, as is my custom, a brief and extremely modest synopsis of my talents, they call it, in their vulgar way, 'braggin'.' I'm the cock of the walk—hooray! I'm the scorpion and centipede-chewer—the wildcat educator—hooray!"

"Faugh! it's downright sickening. Durned ef I kain't lick any man that brags so!" declared the guide, with real rising choler. "An' ef he don't like it he kin lump it—thet's Simpson, the guide."

"Dry up! what's that?" whispered Jack. "Look out, boys—there's something forming."

Look along that bluff yonder—I think I see something moving there."

The half-earnest wrangle was ceased, and shading his eyes, the guide peered, as if endeavoring to pierce the drapery of shadow under the bluff; but if Jack saw anything, there was no repetition of the object. Taking his eyes from the bluff, Colorado Jack turned round, then uttered a suppressed cry.

"What is it?" sharply demanded the guide, instantly on the alert.

"Whew! look there—look yonder!"

They followed the direction of his pointing finger with their gaze. Up the draw, and its widest part, were nearly a dozen Apaches, or rather parts of them moving rapidly about. They were visible from their waists upward, and their arms were tossing as if violently excited. The light of the yellow moon made this a most grotesque spectacle, but an utterly incomprehensible one to the whites, who watched them eagerly. It appeared as if a dozen Apaches had been deprived of their legs at the loins, and had been cast into the draw and were tossing their arms in agony. Part of them were upright, part bending their necks forward, while others were bent backward; and all were gesticulating violently.

It was strange, but they were all facing the west, at right angles to the course of the draw. Though wildly gesturing, and, it seemed, struggling, they preserved the utmost silence, frequently gazing toward the whites, as if fearful of attracting their attention.

"What can it mean?" asked Sam, utterly confounded. "What does it all mean?"

"I think I know," replied Jack, after a moment's sober scrutiny; "don't you, Simpson?"

"Yes—think so."

"What is it?" and Robidoux's face wore a look of the most intense surprise.

"By Jupiter—hooray! it is, it is! Look, they are sinking!"

It was even so! Each and all were only visible from the breast upward, now, and their rifles, still clasped tightly, were thrown about in wild and vehement motions; the guide uttered a sharp exclamation:

"Quicksanded—quicksanded! See—the draw is darker than at t'other places. It's the black sand—quicksand—hooray!"

"Great Heaven!" ejaculated Carpenter. "They are sinking into a quicksand—hurrah!"

"They war makin' a serround and got cotched—hooray!" shouted the guide; then the voice of Colorado Jack rung out:

"Give it to 'em, boys—give it to 'em! Aim steady till I count three, and then—One!"

Up went the guns, each man taking a struggling, sinking savage.

"Two!"

A steady, dead aim.

"Three!"

Crash—shriek! and then a cloud of dense, sluggish smoke obscured the river. They had no more than lowered their rifles when a shrill yell arose behind them, and a rush of feet was heard. Colorado Jack dropped his rifle and drew his knife and revolver, facing round.

"Draw, boys—draw! barkers and knives. A

surround! here comes t'other gang behind us—draw quick, and don't faze!"

They drew, each a knife and revolver, and faced round, fearing nothing from the helpless band behind, some of whom must be dead. They did so just in time.

From under the projecting bluff darted nine stalwart Apaches, knives and tomahawks in hand. They had seen their comrades' utter helplessness and discomfiture, and looking over the smoke of the volley, had seen four shot and instantly killed. Burning with rage and chagrin, they were coming, fifty yards away, with determined faces gleaming hideously through the red war-paint.

As they rapidly drew near, Jack cried:

"Work those pistols lively, boys—shoot a thousand times a minute!"

They obeyed. Crack—crack! went the pistols, and, though excited, the aim was tolerably correct, and two Indians went down; one killed another disabled. Seven still came on, though warily, facing the revolvers of the whites, dodging and darting from side to side to prevent any aim from being taken; in another moment they were fighting hand-to-hand.

It was a short, deadly struggle, briefly terminated. Jack, Simpson, and Burt fell to the ground when their respective antagonists were nigh, avoiding the tomahawks which flew over their heads. Then, as an Apache towered over each, they rose suddenly, and throwing their entire weight and muscle into the act, plunged their knives into the savage breasts; the redskins fell without a groan.

It was a perilous, nice operation, and few would have dared attempt it; but knowing if they kept their nerve and temper they would prove victorious, they accepted the chances, as we have seen, with the highest success. Calculating nicely, each had an interval of *two seconds* to work in—the interval between the Apache's arrival and his downward knife-thrust.

Gigantic, fiery Jack stayed not to enjoy a second and sure thrust, but withdrawing his long knife, glanced hastily around. Back under the bank was a man fighting desperately with two Apaches—fighting wearily, yet strongly, and in silence.

It was Carpenter, cutting, thrusting and dodging. Jack needed but a glance to satisfy him Carpenter would soon prove a victim to the superior prowess of the Apaches, and with a wild hurrah, sprung forward, just as Burt and the guide were disengaging themselves from the dead bodies of their antagonists. But he was stopped suddenly.

Covered with mud, dripping with water, and glowing with rage and heat, a fierce, stalwart savage sprung before him, and he knew him in a moment. It was Red-Knife; he had escaped from the quicksand, and was now preparing to strike, his tomahawk glinting above his head.

"Dog from the Bitter River—squaw! ugh!" and down went the hatchet.

But not in Jack's skull. Bending low, with the quickness of a serpent, he darted under the savage's arm just in time, but he stopped not to congratulate himself upon his escape, but turning, clasped the chief round the waist and suddenly "tripped him up."

He whirled the faint chief over on his back, and with a sudden, keen blow drove the knife into his heart. With a last dying look of malevolence the chief scowled on his victorious enemy, then the death-rattle sounded in his throat; he was dead, no longer a renegade.

Jack sprung up and stood on his guard, but there was no necessity. Short as the combat had been (only *three minutes* in duration), it was now over.

Save the eight prostrate savages, not an Indian was in sight. Cool, steady, reticent Tim Simpson sheathed his knife and picked up his gun and revolver.

"Durned spry work!"

He was not answered. To the majority of the band the thought was overwhelming that, where fifteen minutes since thirty cunning Apaches were surrounding them, not one remained alive. For several minutes no one spoke, but all gazed around on the battle scene.

The draw above was empty; the sinking savages, foiled in their blood purpose, had sunk to their death. Carpenter moodily gazed where they were last visible, and murmured:

"God bless the quicksand."

"Ay, ay!" came from the others' lips.

Colorado Jack sprung up at the "reach" and looked around.

"Yonder go three—no, four devils, striking away for dear life. Durn them! they've got enough of it this time, I'll bet."

"Hosses thar?" asked Simpson.

"One, two, three, eight—every one of 'em."

"Le's git out'n this, then."

"All right—before any more come down on us. Devilish pretty work, wasn't it?" admiringly queried Jack, looking down on the dead bodies below. "How'd you get away with your job, Carpenter?"

"The guide and Burt came to my assistance just as I was giving out. A minute more and it would have been too late."

"And you, Ruby? curse me if I don't forgive you—you fou't like thunder. Two on you, wasn't there?"

"Yes; I stabbed one, and the other ran off, seeing Simpson coming for him," modestly replied Robidoux.

"Well, we've no time to talk. The red rascals are cleaned out. Pick up your weapons, boys, and mount your mustangs, and we'll get away from this hot place."

They stopped not to gaze longer upon the bloody scene, but mounting their horses, which under the bank had bravely stood, rode toward the deserted draft-horses. They were easily collected, and then all rode away, just as the moonlight was yielding to the paler but stronger one of day. Elated with victory, they left Dead Man's Gulches (or that part of them) with the ghastly bodies, soon to wither into dry skin and bone, and under the paling moonlight rode away, bound back to the Hillock.

Thanks to the guide's memory and cunning, they emerged from the Gulches at sunrise, and struck out into the yellow plain—safe and sound, wholly uninjured, and victorious.

"Five men victorious over thirty Apaches," cried Jack. "A tiger-feat—Hercules couldn't do better with Sampson and fifty gorillas thrown

in for variety. Three and a tiger for the bravest, smartest, *handsomest* men in the world! With a will, now!"

With a will they were given.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHO SPEAKS?

WHEN, at the mysterious shot and death of one of their number, the Apaches fled down the hillock, they scuttled for the wagons as offering the best concealment. However, their doing so was to their loss, diminishing their number by two. Duncan, incensed at the ruthless waste of his flour, and in perfect keeping with his disposition, had lain in watchful wait for an opportunity to present itself whereby he could revenge his loss. An opportunity occurred as they fled toward the wagons. One savage, with a scarlet diamond on his broad back, offering a fair aim, he took advantage of it and fired. At the same time Pedro, ever ready to embrace any opportunity, fired also.

Both shots were successful. Duncan's Apache threw his arms aloft, and, with a yell, plunged headlong; the other sunk to the ground with a sharp cry of pain, then crawled slowly away, dragging himself painfully. But he was summarily stopped by Duncan, who emptied one of his cylinders at him. This was sufficient; with a last expiring scowl back upon his foes he settled prone upon the sand, and his soul went to the happy hunting grounds.

"There have been strange happenings here lately," gloomily remarked Pedro, ramming down a bullet. "Who shot just now—tell me that?"

"Who can?" replied Mr. Wheeler. "Oh, God! if one misfortune were not enough to bear without a mystery, deep and black, to drive one to torments. Where is my child?" and he buried his face in his hands.

"And where is my gold—my precious yellow treasure?" fiercely demanded Pedro.

"What misfortune can compare with mine? what agony as great to bear? how—"

Seeing his companion's eyes fixed interrogatively upon him, he stopped short, conscious he had been unduly excited and heedless. Turning sharply to his peeping-place, he said:

"Senors, we have lessened their number; of them there remains but six. One or two more killed or disabled would entirely free us, I think, from their annoying company. Come, senors, look sharp!"

Duncan and Robidoux exchanged significant glances but said nothing, only quietly taking their places at the entrance, leaving Mr. Wheeler stricken again by his gloomy spirits.

And now faint streaks of daylight slanted across the eastern horizon, and the yellow moonlight paled before the approach of the predominating daylight. Perched upon the hubs of the wagon-wheels the sullen Apaches grunted and growled at their constant defeat, not daring to return to the hill, and too wary to expose any part of their bodies. The whites watched and waited with the eyes of a lynx and the patience of a cat, but to no avail—both parties were afraid to show themselves.

"Hark!" suddenly cried Mr. Wheeler, spring-

ing into the center of the cave. "What is it—who speaks?"

"No one spoke, senor," said Pedro, calmly laying his hand on his shoulder; "you are nervous and excited, senor—lie down and quiet yourself."

"Don't talk to me of rest and peace—withdraw your hand! *She* spoke—my daughter—and I will never rest until I have found her."

In the gloomy light, his eyes shone with at once the sorrow and anger of a wounded stag; and knowing to resist him would be to endanger his present health, Pedro considerably withdrew his hand. As he did so, Duncan whispered:

"I'll swear I heard her voice just then—every hair of my head, I did."

"I too, imagined I heard a soft voice, but undoubtedly it was the band outside," continued the Canadian. "Hark—there it is again!"

All listened. Certainly some one spoke in a soft, effeminate voice, though so faintly that it was impossible to distinguish the words.

All listened as though petrified, so intense was the interest—Pedro alive with hope for his gold, and the others, more especially Mr. Wheeler, for his lost child. But there was no petition of the voice, and after listening for some time they returned to the entrance gloomily.

A sudden movement took place among the Apaches. Their mustangs were grassing out on the plain some five hundred yards distant, being some half a mile from the sorrel mustang which avoided them. Starting suddenly from the wagon-wheels, they darted away rapidly toward their steeds, keeping the wagons between them and the hillock, making it impossible for the whites to aim, even tolerably.

"Every hair of my sorrel head! my boot-heels! what in Jupiter do them fellows mean? They're getting away from us like mad. Skunk after 'em, I reckon."

Pedro's face lightened as he said:

"There is some one approaching, possibly the party. Certainly it is some one hostile to them, or—"

He stopped short as a thought flashed over him. Could it be possible they had seen the apparition—that he had appeared to them? No—the idea was rejected as soon as conceived. Not knowing the Trailer, at least that he had been killed once, they would have promptly shot at him, which they had not done. No—it was something else.

It was not a ruse to draw them from their concealment, as every one of the six savages was now scampering hastily for their steeds. They had all retreated—every one; and confident of no harm, Pedro stepped boldly out into the daylight and the open plain.

Down in this country twilights are brief, and even now the sun was winking over the horizon. Looking round, his gaze fell upon a small collection of objects directly against the sun, a league or more distant.

"Horsemen—whites."

The Canadian and his companions came out.

"Horsemen, did you say?"

"Yes, senor—white horsemen."

"Ah, I see—toward the east, against the sun. Coming this way, too, are they not?"

"Exactly, senor."

"How do you know they are white horsemen?—there are many of them."

"Because they ride together. Indians scatter loosely or ride by twos. These are coming together and are leading horses."

"Every hair on my sorrel-top, but you've got sharp eyes!" admiringly spoke the cook.

"Experience, senor, experience. Any Mexican boy could tell you the color of those coming horsemen. But look over the plain; see the brave Apaches scamper toward the southwest, whipping their tardy mustangs. They are gone, and we need fear them no more—they will not come back for the present. We will meet our friends—for it is they."

Of course Pedro was right—he always was; and, when the returning and elated party drew up before the hillock, the savages had disappeared.

They had scarcely dismounted when Mr. Wheeler appeared from within. The old gentleman was greatly excited, and begged them to come at once into the cave.

"What's up?" cried Jack, springing toward the entrance. The old man, in broken tones, said he distinctly heard his daughter's voice in the hill, mingled with a deep, harsh one—the voice of a man.

"There must be another chamber!" Pedro shouted.

"There are shovels in the wagons; get them and come on!" echoed Sam.

The shovels were quickly brought, and the whole party, wildly excited, sprung into the cave.

"Now, listen!" whispered Mr. Wheeler.

They did so, and distinctly heard a female voice, in pleading tones, at one end of the first chamber.

"There is another chamber, and here it is," cried Jack. "Shovel away—work and dig! Simpson, you and Seranton go outside and see no one escapes. She's in a third chamber, and we'll find her—hurrah!"

"Hurrah! we'll find her!" chorused the wild men, commencing to dig furiously.

CHAPTER XV.

TWICE DEAD.

THEY had not long to dig, as the soil was yielding, and the strong arms of the excited and determined men drove the spades deep into the hillside.

At last the foremost man, Sam, uttered a sharp cry, and struck a furious blow at the wall; his shovel had gone through—there was a third chamber. At the same moment a loud report rung out inside, a woman's voice shrieked, and Sam staggered back, clasping his left arm above the elbow with his right hand; some one from the inside had discharged a rifle at him.

Furious before, the excitement now had become frenzy. Several ferocious blows were struck at the hole; it widened; several more, and the men plunged headlong, found themselves in a third chamber, with a body under their feet—a soft, pliant body. Regardless of all else, they drew it to the gap, and recognized the features—the face—the form of—Kissie.

They heard a noise, a clamor above, and ran eagerly outside, leaving Sam, pale and sick, yet

wild with delight, and Mr. Wheeler, caressing the fair girl, who had fainted away.

Arriving outside, the men, headed by Colorado Jack, found the guide and Burt engaged in a fierce struggle with a gigantic man in a *serape*, a conical hat and black plume. Knife in hand, backed up against the hill, with swarthy face glowing, and black eyes sparkling, he was lunging furiously at them in silence. Colossal in form, expert in the use of his knife, rendered desperate by his small chances of escape, the Trailer fought like a demon and kept his smaller opponents at bay.

"Don't kill him!" shouted Jack; "we must take him alive. Let me in to him—stand back, boys. I know who he is—the Trailer."

At the mention of his name, the latter turned and scowled at him, and hoarsely cried:

"Colorado Jack—my old enemy."

Jack, dashing forward with clubbed gun, and with his huge form towering above his companions, rushed at him. In vain the Trailer endeavored to elude the descending weapon; in vain he darted back: the gun descended full on his head, knocking him backward and prone to the earth, senseless.

Just then a man appeared, running, with a bag in one hand and a long, beautiful rifle in the other; it was Pedro Felipe with his recovered treasure, which he discovered in the new chamber. Finding that the apparition that had haunted him was none other than the ex-robber lieutenant, and that, like himself, he was probably in search of the treasure, he had burned with rage at his theft and crime, and was now seeking his life.

"Dog of a robber—fit associate for your old captain; coward, villain, I have come for your blood! Where is he? Let me reach him."

But they held him back firmly, and after being made cognizant of Colorado Jack's desire to keep him alive, he calmed himself, and proceeded to bind the senseless robber securely. This he did with his lariat, which he brought from inside, keeping the precious bag with him wherever he went.

"When the Trailer recovers, he will be shot dead!" said Colorado Jack.

"Ay, ay!" was the general response.

"All right, boys—let us go and see the pretty girl, and leave the two Robidoux to stand guard over him. My eye; ain't she beautiful, though?"

"You bet!" responded Burt proudly.

Inside they found Kissie quite recovered, with her father and young Carpenter sitting jealously by her. Though pale and thin, she, in her joy, looked, to the eyes of the men, more charming than ever before.

What had come to pass? Was a revolution about to arise? for when she signified she was very hungry, Duncan stirred hastily about, actually glad of a chance to cook. Mind that—actually glad. As all were hungry, he was forced to call upon the men for assistance, services which they gladly rendered, and soon the savory odor of cooking filled the cave.

"So he gave you enough to eat, did he, my daughter?" asked Mr. Wheeler, gazing fondly into her face.

"Oh, yes, plenty; and a warm, soft blanket

to sit upon; and he was kind, too—only sometimes he would rave to himself, stricken by remorse."

"Did he maltreat you in any manner?" fiercely demanded Carpenter.

"Oh, no, not at all. He was away most of the time; and when he was present he always kept busy counting a splendid—oh, so lovely!—treasure he had; all gold, and jewels and ornaments—an immense sum they must be worth."

"That is what brought Pedro here, then," remarked Sam; "he has the bag, now, outside, where he is guarding the Trailer."

"Oh, Pedro was so good to me. When he went out to tell you I was here, that horrid man stole in by a secret passage, snatched the bag from a small hole, then put out the torch and carried me in here. His horse he kept there, and sometimes he would get stubborn and try to kick me; then you should have seen him beat him. Once some Indians tried to cut their way through to us, and he shot and killed one."

"Yes, he lies outside now. We heard the shot, and it mystified us," remarked Napoleon Robidoux.

"That villain caused us enough trouble," said Burt. "I'm downright glad he has lost the gold—Pedro has fairly earned it."

"So he has," was the cry.

A shout came from without, in Pedro's voice:

"Come out—come out!"

Expecting Indians, all rushed out, but Sam and Mr. Wheeler, the former being disabled by the bullet of the Trailer, which had passed through his arm, though not breaking it. When they arrived outside they found the Mexican lowering over the ex-robber, who had recovered his senses, and was now scowling upon the party. The blow from the rifle had not proved a very forcible one, as a large "bunch" on his head was the only sign of it.

"Now he has recovered, we will shoot him at once!" and Pedro's eyes sparkled.

"Ay, ay—take him out!" was the unanimous cry.

The Trailer scowled.

All of these men had seen "Judge Lynch," and many had assisted him. Following the order of the age, they did not hesitate, but proceeded at once to business.

They took him from the hillock, from the side of the savage he had slain, and among other red corpses scattered about, they placed him upon his feet. He immediately lay down.

"Get up!" commanded Pedro, who was the acknowledged chief.

The robber only scowled in reply.

"Get up, and die like a man and not like a cowering hound!" urged Jack.

This had the effect desired, and the Trailer rose.

"Now, senors, load your rifles."

"They are all loaded."

"It is well. Have you anything to say, Trailer?"

No answer save a scowl.

"It is your last chance. Again, have you anything to say?"

"Si; car-r-ramba!"

"It is enough. Take him out."

He was placed now in the open plain, facing the hillock. The men drew up in line, not twenty feet distant.

"Are you all ready, senors?" asked Pedro, aiming at the victim's heart.

"We are ready."

"It is good. Aim well. I will count three. One."

The Trailer's face was a trifle paler now, but his scowl was blacker and more malignant.

"Two!"

The Trailer stood firm. Along the line of men he saw no look of mercy, nor look of pity; only a settled determination to execute the law of "Judge Lynch."

Dead silence.

"Three!"

The Trailer fell flat on his face. Lifting him up they found him dead—twice dead—but now forever on earth.

Our tale is ended. Colorado Jack, the Tiger, with many good wishes and blessings from his true friends, at length tore himself away, and rode off toward the Colorado River, to which place he was *en route*, long to be remembered by those he had befriended.

Simpson parted with Pedro much against his will, but was consoled by the latter's promising to meet him on the Colorado. Then he, Pedro, and Colorado Jack were to unite, and, well armed and equipped, were to penetrate to the ruins of the old Aztecs—a much-talked of, but rarely seen country. They underwent many marvelous and perilous adventures, but we have no space to relate them.

Pedro was rich—enormously rich—and on returning safely to his "sunny land," was joyfully welcomed back, and congratulated upon his success.

When the party arrived at Fort Leavenworth, as they safely did, there was a wedding, and a joyful one it was, too, Sam, of course, being the happy groom. There the party separated, all but Duncan and Simpson continuing their journey east.

Strange to say, Duncan—grumbling, unhappy Duncan—went back with Simpson, in order to explore the Great Colorado Canyon, with the three Indian-fighters, in the capacity of *camp cook*. He was unhappy, of course, and he had no cooking conveniences; but managed to assume complete mastery over his strangely-assorted companions, and to keep them alive with his original observations and half-sulky grumblings.

THE END.

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